Probable cause found to try man accused of killing another. PAGE 2
Victim and family of a man hit by car need help. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

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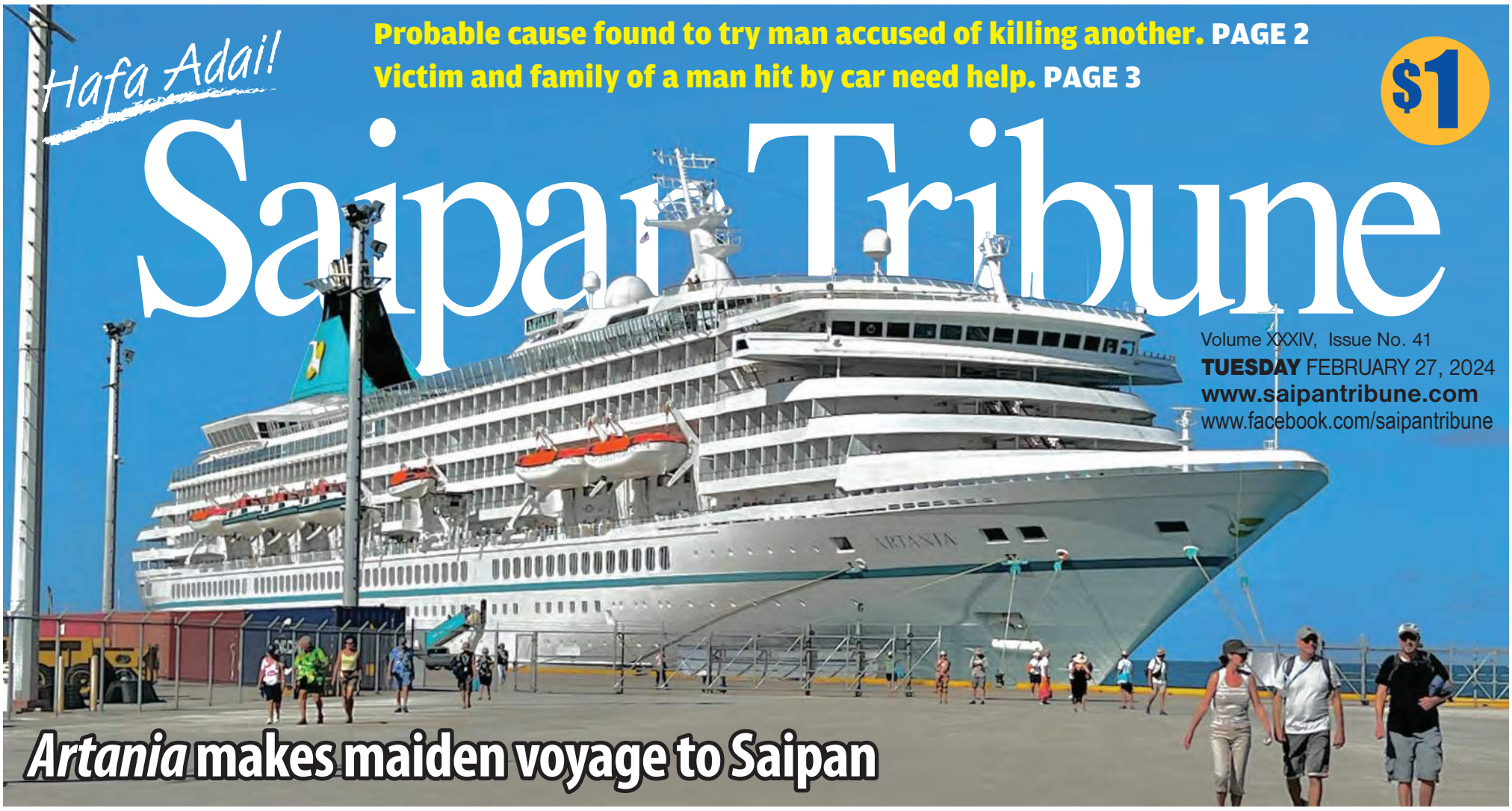

Artania makes maiden voyage to Saipan

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The M/S *Artania*, the historical ship originally named "Royal Princess" after Princess Diana, made its maiden voyage to Saipan yesterday.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Phoenix Reisen's M/S *Artania* made its maiden voyage to Saipan yesterday afternoon, bringing with it over 1,500 passengers who stayed on Saipan for the entire day before leaving for their next destination at around 6pm.

See ARTANIA on Page 4

Still no IPI settlement

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

» **IPI manager/director Chi says they asked for another extension in revocation hearing as gov't seems to need time to assess IPI's offer**

Yeom

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC, the Commonwealth Casino Commission, and the government remain deadlocked on settlement negotiations yesterday afternoon—with just two days remaining before the scheduled hearing whether or not to revoke IPI's exclusive casino license.

CCC executive director Andrew Yeom disclosed yesterday that IPI had asked

See IPI on Page 4

IN CONTEMPT CASE AGAINST TORRES

Barcinas takes arguments under advisement

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Former governor Ralph DLG Torres leaves the Guma Hustisia following a motion hearing yesterday.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Superior Court judge *pro tem* Arthur Barcinas has taken under advisement the arguments made by the parties in the ongoing contempt case against former governor

See BARCINAS on Page 4

Revised $15M MPLT line of credit bill passes Senate

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), extreme left, raises some issues during the deliberation of the Senate's version yesterday of a bill that repeals and re-enacts a newly enacted public law that authorizes the Commonwealth government to negotiate a $15-million revolving line of credit with the Marianas Public Land Trust. The Senate passed their version of the legislation during the session.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

After much discussions and several committee meetings, the Senate passed yesterday their version of a bill that repeals and re-enacts a newly enacted public law that authorizes the Commonwealth government to negotiate a $15-million revolving line of credit with the Marianas Public Land Trust.

With all seven senators

See REVISED on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS
Takakazu Saishu-Castro opened TOKYO café in September 2022 to finally bring what he describes as Japanese specialty coffee to Saipan's coffee connoisseurs.
PAGE 10

WORLD
Israel's defense minister vowed Sunday to step up attacks on Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group even if a cease-fire is reached with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.
PAGE 11

LIFE & STYLE
For a second straight week, biopic " Bob Marley: One Love " continues to exceed expectations by claiming the No. 1 spot at the box office.
PAGE 12

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Probable cause found to try man accused of killing another

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has found probable cause to try a man accused of unknowingly killing a man in defense of a security guard.

Last week, Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho found probable cause to try Calvin C. Tagabuel with second-degree murder, and aggravated assault and battery.

Tagabuel was initially charged with manslaughter but he is now being tried for second-degree murder, which is the act of killing another person without premeditation.

After the hearing, Tagabuel was remanded back to Department of Corrections custody and was ordered to return to the court to be arraigned on March 4.

According to court documents, the Department of Public Safety received a call on Saturday, Jan. 6, reporting an unconscious male lying outside Cool Laundry in Kagman. The man was later identified as Lark Kasian.

When police and medics arrived at the laundromat, they found Kasian lying between the stairway to the entrance of the laundromat with his mouth swollen and covered in dried blood, along with a scraped knee and bloody pants. Responding officers said that Kasian was awake but was unable to speak.

Kasian was then transported to the Commonwealth Health Center that same day at 10:15pm for further evaluation and treatment. Six day later, on Jan. 12, at around 6:07am, Kasian was pronounced dead, and the cause of death was subarachnoid hemorrhage, or bleeding in the head.

DPS investigators returned to Cool Laundry on Jan. 12 to obtain surveillance footage. At the scene, one of the investigators encountered Tagabuel, who asked if they were investigating Kasian's passing. During this exchange, Tagabuel allegedly mentioned that he fought with Kasian days prior. Tagabuel agreed to be interviewed by police.

In that interview, Tagabuel stated that on the evening of Jan. 5, he had just returned to his apartment to find Kasian inside Cool Laundry while an on-duty security guard was asking for his help because Kasian was threatening to hurt them.

Tagabuel said he approached Kasian and punched him in the mouth, causing him to fall to the ground. Tagabuel told police that because Kasian appeared to be "knocked out," he slapped him twice in the face to wake him up. Police said surveillance footage acquired matched what Tagabuel stated.

Police also learned from the owner of Cool Laundry that on the evening of Jan. 5, Kasian was seen drinking alcoholic beverages with a group of people when he got into an argument with them.

Rabauliman confirmed as DCCA chief; George as member of HCPLB

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Senate unanimously confirmed yesterday the appointment of Francisco M. Rabauliman to serve as the secretary of the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, and the re-appointment of Dr. Glenda S. George to serve as a member of the Health Care Professions Licensing Board.

All seven senators present at the session voted "yes" to adopt the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee reports that recommended the confirmation of both appointments.

In an interview after his confirmation, Rabauliman acknowledged that entering DCCA is no small task, the department being one of the biggest in the government, but he assured he is ready to get down to work.

"I got a lot of work ahead. I'm looking forward to the challenges," he said, adding that becoming DCCA secretary will be a huge addition to what he is doing right now.

Rabauliman is currently the board chair of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority and, as CEDA board chair, is automatically a member of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board of directors.

In a separate interview, George said she is very grateful for this opportunity to continue to serve on the HCPLB.

George said it is her goal to continue to work hard in developing the regulations that the CNMI does not have and update those that are outdated or needing to be revised to conform with national standards.

"That is my mission: to continue to serve our community with the best that I can," said George, who is a psychologist and serves as director of the clinical side of the Community Guidance Center.

At the start of the session, John Paul Reyes, who is the acting special assistant for the administration, expressed the Palacios-Apatang administration's appreciation and gratitude to Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) and EAGI Committee chair Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) and members for the time and efforts they all put into reviewing and examining the nominees' appointments.

Reyes said the administration continues to work on completing the vacancies for all boards, commissions, and department heads.

Rabauliman was nominated to be the acting DCCA secretary last Jan. 5 and his confirmation hearing was conducted last Feb. 16.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Behavioral Science from the California Polytechnic State University. Babauta said his vast experiences throughout the CNMI government are too many to list. Rabauliman previously served as, among other positions, senior policy advisor at the Office of the Governor, administrator of the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, and executive assistant of the Carolian Affairs Office.

Babauta said Rabauliman's experience makes him a well-rounded candidate and qualifies for the DCCA secretary position.

George was re-appointed by Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang on Dec. 16, 2023, and her confirmation hearing was held last Feb. 16. George has been involved in the HCPLB since 2016 and holds a doctorate from Seattle Pacific University.

Since joining the HCPLB, George has made great strides to update and improve the local health care professional licensing regulations to meet national standards, Babauta said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The CNMI Department of Commerce, Central Statistics Division will start the CNMI 2024 Prevailing Wage Study (PWS) survey beginning on March 01, 2024 and notifies all businesses and employers in the CNMI to log on to the CSD Data Collection Portal and complete the PWS survey questionnaire.

All businesses and employers (Private & Public), with and with no employees, are urged to complete this survey before March 15, 2024.

Data Collection Portal Link: http://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp/dev1/

Victim and family of a man hit by car need help

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ruben Luna is bedridden after a car hit him while he was walking in Koblerville on Jan. 31, 2023. His wife, Estrella Jumila Luna, and son, Christian Troy Rosimo, are asking for financial assistance for medical bills accrued since the accident.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The family of 62-year-old Ruben Luna, who was hit by a car on Jan. 31, 2023, is seeking financial assistance for medical bills that are being incurred over a year since the accident.

Luna has been bedridden in their home after being hit by a car while he was walking in Koblerville. Since then, he's required the daily help and assistance of a caregiver. He also gets transported to and from the hospital and his home by an ambulance for check-ups and other necessary medical procedures done.

Luna had not been working for some time prior to his accident as he was taking care of his ill mother and does not have insurance.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

QR code for the Paypal account where donations could be sent. Paypal ctrosimo@gmail.com to donate.

The medical bills have accrued to over $15,000 from the time of his admittance to the hospital after the accident—not including cost of medication, necessary procedures, ambulance bills, and the caregiver's salary. Since the accident, those bills have stacked up considerably on top of the family's monthly car payments, rent, grocery, and other living expenses.

It cost $3,000 alone per day for his hospital room, where he stayed for three days. This did not include all the medicine, x-rays, and CT scan that were done. Just last month, Luna was rushed to the hospital because blood had been coming out of his trachea's tube for a couple of days.

See VICTIM on Page 4

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-24-013
PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF NEW GENSET UNITS FOR SAIPAN, POWER PLANT NO.4

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified Contractors or Vendors for the purchase and installation of new gensets for Power Plant No.4 located on the island of Saipan. The purchase and installation of the new gensets with approximately 6MW of total new output will improve CUC current power generation capacity needed to sustain critical electrical services to the community of Saipan.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The RFP package will be emailed to the registered email ID. Prospective Proposers for this RFP must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division by March 8, 2024 to be considered.

A Pre-proposal Conference followed by site visits will be held on **February 22, 2024 at 10:00 AM (CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-RFP-24-013, Purchase and Installation of New Genset Units for Saipan Power Plant No.4"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 A.M.(ChST) on March 19, 2024.** Proposals mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes which will become the obligation of the proposer awarded a contract.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This request and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 27, 2024,** to Manny Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Richard Cano, CUC's Power Generation Manager via email richard.cano@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Adult Health Check

Feb 28th
- **Feb. 28 at Capitol Hill Fire Station from 8:00AM - 11:30AM**

Clinical check with provider includes routine wellness exam, physical screening for height and weight, and/or consultation for other concerns. Other community health services: blood pressure check, glucose check, resources & referrals.

Child Health Check

Feb 7th & 23rd
- **Feb. 7 at Han Nam Supermarket, Koblerville from 1:00PM - 4:30PM**
- **Feb. 23 at San Vicente Youth Center from 1:00PM - 4:30PM**

For children 0-17 years old. Clinical check with provider includes developmental behavioral assessment, measurement and growth, other health screening, and/or consultation for other concerns.

Women Health Check

Feb 8th & 16th
- **Feb. 8 at NAP Office, As Lito from 8:00AM - 11:30AM**
- **Feb. 16 at Systems of Care, San Antonio from 8:00AM - 11:30AM**

Recommended for women who haven't seen a provider in over a year for clinical services: Pap Smears, breast exams, prenatal care, postpartum care, and/or contraceptive counseling and methods

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charity@chodsonlaw.com

Attorney for Co-Petitioner Qiao Qiao Chen

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

THE ESTATE OF JIALIN CHEN, Deceased.	**Civil Action No. 24-0048-CV** **NOTICE OF HEARING AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS** Date: Thursday, March 14, 2024 Time: 10:00 am Judge: Joseph Norita

TO: THE GENERAL PUBLIC, ANY HEIRS, CLAIMANTS, OR CREDITORS OF THE LATE JIALIN CHEN OR HIS ESTATE: NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that **Jinjiao Chen** and **Qiao Qiao Chen** have petitioned the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to issue Letters of Administration for the Estate of Jialin Chen, the deceased. The hearing on the Petition is scheduled to be heard on the date and at the time set forth above at the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All interested persons or entities should appear at this hearing. Any and all persons, creditors, or entities having claims against the deceased or his Estate are hereby required by law to file their claims with the Clerk of Court within sixty (60) days of this publication or the claim(s) will be baited. A copy of your claim should also be sent to the attorney for Petitioner, **CHARITY R. HODSON, Attorney at Law**, whose address is Plata Drive, Chalan Kiya, P.O. Box 502607, Saipan, MP 96950.

Dated this 22nd day of February, 2024.

/s/
Clerk of Court/Deputy Clerk of Court

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP NO.: DPW24-RFP No.: 42400058

SUBMISSION DATE: March 27, 2024 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Engineering and Design Related Services Coastal Retreat for Atkins-Kroll Intersection and Dotse Place, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **February 27, 2024** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

There will be a **Pre-Proposal Conference** for this project on **March 14, 2024,** 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **March 20, 2024** to **Mr. George C. Sablan, Acting Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/RAY N. YUMUL
Secretary, DPW

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, Division of Procurement Services

Police on the hunt for woman who failed to appear in court

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety is seeking the community's help in locating a woman who failed to show up for a court hearing.

According to a DPS news release yesterday, the department is on the hunt for Juanita Villanueva, 22, who is wanted for failing to appear for a Superior Court review hearing. A bench warrant of $5,000 has been issued for her arrest.

DPS
Juanita Villanueva is seen here in a file photo.

For anyone who may have any information on the whereabouts of Villanueva, DPS is urging them to call Crimes Stoppers at (670) 234-7272.

Villanueva was one of three individuals allegedly involved in robbing a man at gunpoint last Oct. 15, 2023.

The charges against Villanueva have been already been dropped.

According to court documents, police responded last Oct. 15 to a theft report made by a man who claimed he had been robbed.

The following day, Oct. 16, detective Joey Lizama met with the victim, who said that Villanueva had contacted him over 10 times on Oct. 15 asking him for money. Sometime after 7pm, he said he picked Villanueva up at the parking area across Pacific Islands Club Saipan. He noted that he saw her exit a black SUV-type car before coming over to his car.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

ARTANIA

From page 1

The M/S *Artania*, a mid-size cruise ship that is set to complete a tour around the globe in six months, made its first trip to Saipan and docked at the Saipan Seaport at around 7:30am yesterday morning.

In an interview with the vessel's captain Burkhard Mueller, he said yesterday's journey to Saipan was the first, and hopefully not the last, for the legendary M/S *Artania*.

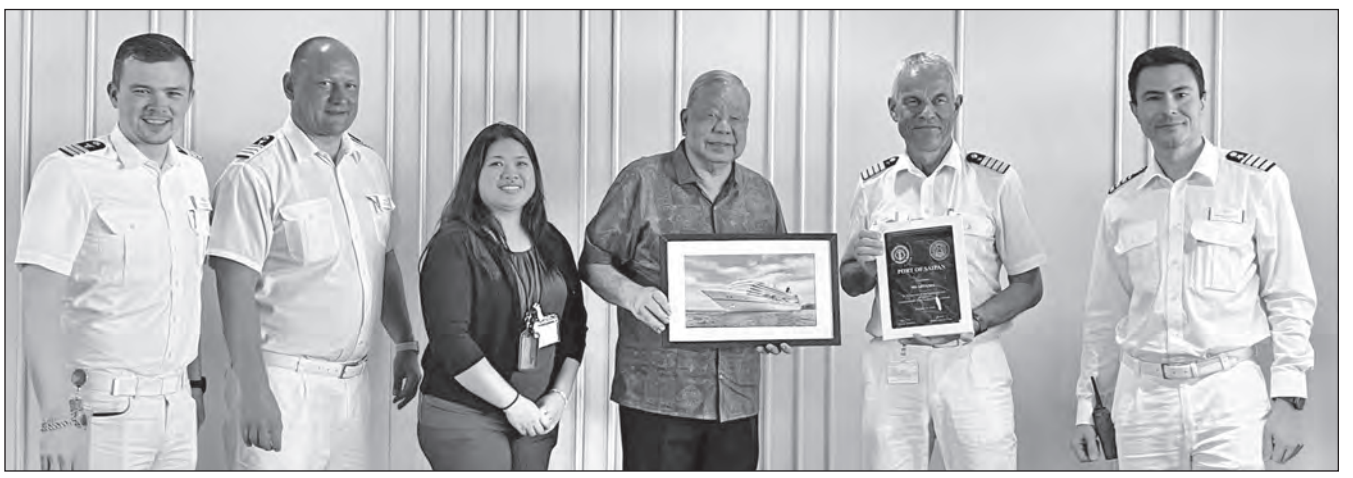
"This is our first time here and we are happy. Every year, we collect new ports. Today is one of those momentous occasions because this is our first time here. This is always exciting," he said.

Mueller shared that the M/S *Artania* was originally named "The Royal Princess" when it made its inaugural voyage back in 1984. The vessel was named after Princess Diana Spencer up until it was chartered by Phoenix Reisin back in 2011.

"The vessel is not very young. She's about 40 years old. …She is a world-famous ship because she was named after Princess Diana herself. After 40 years, the ship is still very well-maintained," he said.

Mueller said the *Artania* began its cruise in Germany before Christmas last year and is expected to end in May. Their next stop after Saipan is Yokohama, Japan.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com



KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Lt. Gov. David Apatang, third from the right, poses for a photo with M/S *Artania* officers after giving them a plaque for visiting Saipan as part of their six-monthlong world cruise.

BARCINAS

From page 1

Ralph DLG Torres and whether probable cause is required in this case.

Assistant attorney general James Kingman, Torres, and his lawyer, Jack Torres, appeared for a motion hearing before Barcinas, who presided over the hearing virtually yesterday, to argue whether a determination of probable cause is necessary in the case.

Torres' defense argued that the penal summons served on the former governor was defective because of the lack of probable cause determination that shows Torres must answer the charges filed against him.

"There is lack of a probable cause determination. We are not asking for a preliminary hearing. Our CNMI Constitution prohibits unreasonable seizures. What we have here today is that Mr. Torres is required to come to court to answer certain charges. That itself is a seizure of his rights. Instead of being out there and earning a living for his family, he is required by the government to appear in court today to answer certain charges. Without probable cause, we believe that violates our CNMI Constitution," said Jack Torres.

Citing different scenarios involving other criminal cases, he also argued that Ralph Torres' equal protection rights are being violated. Specifically, Jack Torres argues that Kingman's penal summons was not signed and reviewed by a judge. In other criminal cases, he said, a judge must first review and sign off on an arrest warrant for others, showing probable cause to charge a defendant, therefore Torres' equal protection rights were violated.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

IPI

From page 1

for another extension on the scheduled revocation hearing, but he plans to move forward at this time with the hearing that is set for tomorrow, Wednesday—barring any court order to stay or suspend the proceeding.

"Without revealing details, we do not have a deal, therefore, I am moving forward as planned," Yeom said.

Separately, IPI manager/director Howyo Chi told *Saipan Tribune* that no agreement has been reached as of yesterday afternoon as they are waiting for a response from the government about their offer.

Chi said he sent an email request to CCC for another extension of the hearing, but it was unanswered.

"The government seems to need additional time to assess the settlement terms, prompting our request for another continuance," he said.

Yeom was unable to share much details about the settlement discussions in an interview last Sunday, citing confidentiality and sensitivity of the subject.

"I would love to share all of the details as I am frustrated by this delay in settlement talks that are beyond my control or my liking," Yeom said.

He said they have made significant progress, but there are multiple parties in the discussions that need confirmation—both in the internal government and external ones that are beyond his control.

"We are much closer than ever, but no deal at this time," said Yeom, who assured he is doing all he can to bring a finality and/or conclusion to the matter, either via settlement or revocationW&BV6 6 of the license.

Obviously, he said, an amicable settlement route is much more time efficient, cleaner, and the surest way to jumpstart the CNMI economy, rather than taking the long and winding revocation road.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

NMI awarded Emergency Food and Shelter funds

The CNMI has been awarded federal funds made available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency under the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program.

The CNMI has been chosen to receive $83,655 to supplement emergency food and shelter programs throughout the Commonwealth. The selection was made by a national board that is chaired by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and consists of representatives from American Red Cross; Catholic Charities, USA; National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA; The Jewish Federations of North America, The Salvation Army; and, United Way Worldwide.

A CNMI board, made up of local community stakeholders, will determine how the funds awarded to the Commonwealth are to be distributed among the emergency food and shelter programs run by local service agencies. The local board is responsible for recommending agencies to receive these funds (Phase 41). ***(PR)***

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

MMAC team captains meeting on Feb. 29

The Marianas March Against Cancer Team Recruitment Committee will be meeting this Thursday, Feb. 29, at 5:30pm at the Commonwealth Cancer Association Office, Suite 104 of the Marina Heights Building in Puerto Rico.

The committee will be reviewing this year's team captain's packet that highlights the event and all deadlines associated with the different committees.

For more information, email recruitment.mmac@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

REVISED

From page 1

present at the Senate session voting "yes," the legislation, House Bill No. 23-95, House Substitute 1, Senate Substitute 2, as amended, now goes back to the House of Representatives for action.

Senators Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) and Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) were absent but excused from the session.

The bill required an affirmative vote of two thirds of the senators present at the session. With seven votes cast yesterday, the legislation therefore passes the Senate, said Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan)

Before the voting, the Senate adopted the Fiscal Affairs Committee report that recommended the passage of the proposed legislation in the form of House Bill 23-95, House Substitute 1, Senate Substitute 2.

Sen. Karl R. King-Nabors (R-Saipan) then offered several amendments. Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) raised some issues, then senators subsequently adopted King-Nabors' amendments and passed the legislation.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

VICTIM

From page 3

Christian Troy Rosimo, Luna's son, said, "It's been a year since he got his feeding tube placed. Food has been building up on the tube and it is becoming discolored so the doctor advised us to replace it in order to keep my dad healthy. The procedure costs about $3,400."

Luna's wife, Estrella Jumila Luna, and Rosimo asked for their story to be told so they can get the help they need. The family added that they also appreciate all the help that they've had so far since the accident.

For donations, Paypal: ctrosimo@gmail.com. Scan the QR code in this story.

Justice

In addition to financial assistance, the family is also seeking justice. The driver has not been arrested nor has he assisted with any of Luna's bills. Estrella, a daycare worker at Gana Daycare, said she's asked help from the government, lawyers, and others, to no avail.

After the initial accident, a police report was taken, but she said no other updates were given. Estrella went to the Department of Public Safety to ask for an update sometime last year, but was told that the matter is still under investigation.

Estrella appeals to the driver to come forward and hopes he can reach out to them and assist them in any way he can.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

PSS receives high marks in federal SLDS site visit

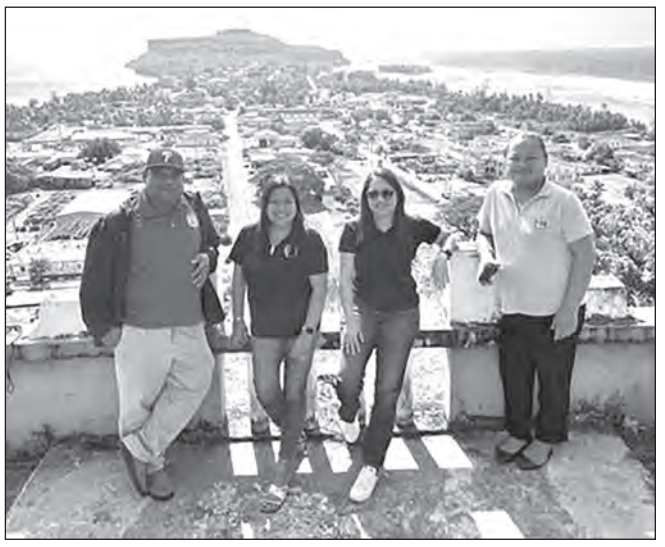
The CNMI Public School System announced the successful completion of its second site visit under the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program.

Conducted virtually on Oct. 2, 2023, by the federal SLDS team, the visit aimed to evaluate PSS' progress on SLDS grant-funded initiatives, provide technical guidance, and highlight best practices. PSS has officially launched the first-ever, Commonwealth-wide data system that connects, manages, analyzes, disaggregates, and uses student data.

PSS, serving the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, operates 20 schools and 11 Early Head Start and Head Start sites, catering to approximately 9,000 students.

Recognizing the pivotal role of longitudinal data systems in enhancing student services, PSS embarked on a journey to establish a robust SLDS infrastructure. While initially unsuccessful in securing federal SLDS funding in 2009, PSS remained committed to its goal, actively engaging in SLDS community activities and capacity-building initiatives.

In March 2020, PSS received a $2.5-million SLDS grant for infrastructure development, focusing on Early Head Start, Head Start, and K-12 data. The grant aimed to achieve two primary outcomes: establishing a highly effective SLDS infrastructure and transitioning data usage from compliance to strategic instructional applications.



PSS

The CNMI Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Team. From left, Ferdinand Ngirmekur, data privacy specialist; Jeaniffer Cubangbang, SLDS technical manager; Dr. Annette Pladevega Sablan, SLDS project director; and Shawna Indalecio, Project specialist.

At the time of this site visit, PSS had made remarkable progress, with 83% of the fiscal year 2019 SLDS grant project completed and 80% of the grant funds utilized. The visit highlighted several strengths and best practices that have significantly benefited PSS and could serve as exemplary models for other states.

The report notes: "Now that CNMI PSS' SLDS has an operational early warning system, educators are actively embedding data use into their individual and collective instructional processes."

The report also highlighted how the "SLDS team is taking a thoughtful, holistic approach to embedding the SLDS products in existing onboarding, professional development, planning, accountability, and other processes and venues."

The report also states how "the grant-funded outputs from the SLDS are directly aligned with CNMI PSS' policy and programmatic goals, which clearly demonstrate the system's value."

Other key strengths include:

- Clear communication of SLDS purpose and vision;
- Detailed project planning and management;
- Maturation and expansion of data governance program;
- Active integration of data use into instructional processes;
- Robust stakeholder engagement and communication strategies; and
- Strategic focus on sustainability through organizational capacity building.

The visit also provided valuable recommendations for further enhancement, including:

- Thoughtful expansion of SLDS scope while ensuring sustainability;
- Maturing the data governance program at the leadership level; and
- Enhancing stakeholder engagement through newsletters and demonstrations.

For more information, contact slds@cnmipss.org

About CNMI SLDS

The CNMI PSS is dedicated to providing quality education and support services to Saipan, Tinian, and Rota students. With a focus on innovation and excellence, CNMI PSS strives to empower students for success in a rapidly evolving world.

The CNMI's SLDS program consists of Dr. Annette Pladevega Sablan (project director), Shawna Indalecio (project specialist), Jeaniffer Cubangbang (SLDS technical manager), and Ferdinand Ngirmekur (data privacy specialist).

The SLDS is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Education, state education agency, and other stakeholders, including educators, researchers, and policymakers. The SLDS website is just one of the many tools that the system provides to help education professionals make informed decisions and improve educational outcomes.

To learn more about the State Longitudinal Data System and its new website, visit https://slds.cnmipss.org. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-24-011
DEBT COLLECTION LEGAL SERVICES

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified and experienced entities for Debt Collection Legal Services.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set. Perspective Entities must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-RFP-24-011, Debt Collection Legal Services**" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 A.M.(ChST) on March 15, 2024,** Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 23, 2024,** to Manny Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Bettina G. Terlaje, CUC's Chief of Administration via email betty.terlaje@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email address marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

mina
Mariana Islands Nature Alliance

Request for Proposals (RFP)
for Marine Debris Salvage Project at Laolao Bay-Saipan, CNMI - Issued by the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance (MINA)

Project Overview: The Mariana Islands Nature Alliance (MINA) invites qualified individuals, organizations, and companies to submit proposals for a marine debris salvage project at Laolao Bay on the island of Saipan, CNMI. MINA is dedicated to addressing the critical issue of typhoon-generated marine debris, promoting environmental sustainability, and preserving the natural beauty of the islands.

Project Objectives: The primary objectives of this project are as follows:

1. Effectively salvage all remaining anchoring systems and associated debris of what was formerly the NOAA CREWS station that was deployed in 2011.
2. Prepare salvaged marine debris for removal and transport. (MINA has already procured a contractor for debris removal and transport from the site.)

Scope of Work: The selected contractor will be responsible for the following tasks:

1. Develop a detailed salvage and debris staging plan outlining methodologies, equipment, and personnel requirements.
2. Execute the salvage of the specified marine debris with a strong emphasis on minimizing environmental impact.
3. Ensure strict adherence to all relevant permit conditions both Federal and CNMI as provided by MINA.
4. Provide regular progress updates and a comprehensive final report to MINA.

NOTE For a detailed Scope of Work, please email David Benavente, MINA Project Manager, at dbenavente.mina@gmail.com

Proposal Requirements: Interested parties are requested to submit comprehensive proposals containing the following elements:

1. A brief introduction of the contractor, highlighting relevant experience in marine debris salvage projects and related qualifications.
2. A detailed project plan encompassing approaches, techniques, equipment, and a project timeline for debris salvage.
3. Explanation of safety protocols, environmental safeguards, and mitigation measures to ensure project compliance.
4. A comprehensive budget detailing costs for personnel, equipment, transportation, disposal, and community engagement activities.
5. An overview of previous projects similar in nature, including references from clients or partners.

Submission Deadline and Contact Information: Proposals must be submitted electronically to minaoutreach@gmail.com no later than 3/27/2024. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered. For inquiries and clarifications, please email David Benavente at dbenavente.mina@gmail.com.

*** NOTE***Interested parties are directed not to contact any employees, sponsors, or Mariana Islands Nature Alliance (MINA) officials other than those specifically designated in this RFP. Unauthorized contact may be cause for rejection of proposals at MINA's sole discretion. Additionally, all correspondence must be submitted by email only.

Evaluation and Selection: Proposals will undergo a thorough evaluation based on the contractor's experience, proposed methodologies, budget, and capability to fulfill the project's objectives. MINA reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal and to award the contract to the most qualified and suitable proponent.

Contractual Information: The chosen contractor must enter into a formal contract with MINA, outlining project terms, payment structure, reporting obligations, and deliverables.
Thank you for your interest and consideration in submitting your proposal and commitment to preserving Saipan's natural resources.

Sincerely,

Roberta Guerrero
Executive Director
Mariana Islands Nature Alliance (MINA)
minaoutreach@gmail.com
(670) 233 REEF (7333)
2/27/2024

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 41

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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

I think the TRUMP SHOES really complete the look.
MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN
RE-ELECT THE RAPIST IN-CHIEF
BAN BOOKS BY THE BLACKS
PUTIN ★ TRUMP 2024
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EDITORIAL

Diplomacy and duplicity at the UN: America tries to end Gaza war, while China and Russia stoke fire

How many times does the United States have to veto a misguided UN Security Council resolution on the Israel/Hamas war until the other countries on the council understand that Hamas must be condemned by name, the fighting should stop and all the Israeli hostages kidnapped on Oct. 7 have to be released?

The answer is at least three, as this week U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield correctly cast another U.S. veto on the war, following ones in October and December. The problem with this current resolution, offered by Algeria, is that again Hamas went blameless and there was no causation between a pause in the combat and freedom for the hostages.

Thomas-Greenfield says that she is working on a draft resolution to do just that, but it faces a veto threat by the peace loving Chinese and Russians, who jointly vetoed an October resolution because it was too harsh on the murderers and rapists of Hamas.

Beijing and Moscow are striving to sow as much discord as they can while Washington is trying to achieve a ceasefire and the return of the hostages. American diplomacy, working with Qatar and Egypt, succeeded earlier and negotiations are still underway.

War is horrible and Hamas started this war, bringing death and destruction to the people of Israel, which has brought death and destruction to the Gaza Strip as the cowards of Hamas hide among the innocent Palestinian civilians. Hamas has had thousands of its terrorists killed, but along with those dead terrorists, there have been too many Palestinian civilians killed and wounded.

While Hamas doesn't care about the Palestinian civilians, as they see every death as another martyr in their holy war to annihilate the Jews, they do want the fighting to stop before all of the terrorists and the ring leaders have been taken out. So how to make sure that every hostage is released when the guns go silent? That is what Thomas-Greenfield is seeking.

Time is short. The last of Hamas (and likely the remaining hostages) are in Rafah in the southern corner of Gaza, with the IDF poised to enter the city, swollen with refugees who fled the fighting to the north. It could be a humanitarian nightmare on top of the other humanitarian nightmares of this war, and the U.S. is trying to find a way to avoid the potential catastrophe of the Israeli army hunting for desperate Hamas fighters amid the innocents.

But the Algeria plan would not work. Hamas would use the quieting of the fighting to retrench and rearm, extending the war instead of ending it.

The best outcome would be for Hamas to immediately surrender all remaining Israeli hostages and leave Gaza. The terrorists' 17-year reign over Gaza ended in disaster for Palestinians, as well as for death for Israelis. Instead of freedom, prosperity and

See DIPLOMACY on Page 7

Alabama's highest court declared frozen embryos people. The US Supreme Court is to blame

By HARRY LITMAN
Los Angeles Times

Harry Litman is the host of the "Talking Feds" podcast.@harrylitman

The Alabama Supreme Court's breathtakingly arrogant, slapdash and pernicious opinion conferring personhood on newly formed embryos vividly illustrates the consequences of another reckless decision: the U.S. Supreme Court's reversal of Roe vs. Wade.

The Alabama court held last week that fertilized ova cryogenically preserved for couples having difficulty conceiving are legally and morally equivalent to newborn babies and, for that matter, 20-year-old adults. According to the court, all are human beings protected under Alabama law to precisely the same extent.

The decision clears the way for wrongful death lawsuits brought by couples whose embryos were destroyed by a patient who wandered into an in vitro fertilization clinic through an unsecured entrance, picked up several frozen fertilized eggs and, shocked by their cryogenic temperature, immediately dropped them on the floor. Reversing the trial court, the Alabama Supreme Court held that this conduct could be subject to a wrongful death claim, rendering it indistinguishable from, say, the death of a 2-year-old negligently left in a sweltering car.

Astonishingly, the sole focus of the court's analysis was whether Alabama's wrongful death law encompasses "extrauterine children—that is, unborn children who are located outside of a biological uterus at the time they are killed." The court did not even attempt to wrestle with the distinction between a just-fertilized egg—what biologists call a blastocyst, a ball of up to a few hundred cells measuring a fraction of a millimeter in diameter—and a fully formed child born at term.

It's customary to note the parade of horribles that could be occasioned by such an extreme decision. But here the parade has already begun.

Alabama's largest hospital announced Wednesday that it would no longer offer would-be parents in vitro fertilization procedures due to the substantial threat of criminal liability for mishandling fertilized eggs. Other providers followed suit Thursday. Medical personnel who try to help couples conceive have been suddenly recast by the courts as potential murderers.

The immediate consequences don't end there. Women who use intrauterine devices or morning-after pills, which can affect fertilized eggs, are in the eyes of Alabama law rank baby killers.

The court's supposed legal opinion in fact rests on the tenet that life begins at conception, a matter of religious faith to which only a small minority of the country subscribes.

Chief Justice Tom Parker's concurring opinion employs quotations and teachings from Scripture as if they had the legal force of the Bill of Rights. Passages from Genesis and Exodus, various theological tracts, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards take their place alongside the writings of U.S. Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Neil M. Gorsuch. All are marshaled in support of the view that "God made every person in his image… and human life cannot be wrongfully destroyed without incurring the wrath of a holy God, who views the destruction of His image as an affront to Himself."

But apart from the wrath of God, there is no attempt to rationalize the legal equation of a frozen, formless collection of cells with a living person. The court simply assumes it away with the syllogistic reasoning that Alabama's statutory law specifies that human life includes "unborn" life.

Such ham-handedness undermines the entire opinion. The critical question for the state is not whether an embryo of any particular age can be said to be, in some sense, alive; it's whether it is a human being deserving of the rights and protections accorded to all of us, which is a far broader and more complicated designation.

A stadium full of theologians, philosophers, ethicists and politicians couldn't come up with an authoritative answer to that question. And in the absence of such an answer, how can the state impinge so deeply on the liberty of women and aspiring parents?

It's in that sense that the Alabama Supreme Court's opinion can be traced directly to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization.* The idea of shoving this tendentious religious tract down Americans' throats would have been a nonstarter under Roe vs. Wade, which asserted the constitutional liberty interests of women against an overreaching, moralistic state.

Post-Dobbs, those rights are featherweight. The outrage belongs with the U.S. Supreme Court's ill reasoning and grotesque overreach.

Nor is Alabama the only state purporting to enshrine the fundamentally religious position that human life begins at conception in law. Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Oklahoma issued similar proclamations in the wake of Dobbs.

The Alabama Supreme Court takes this malign presumption to its logical end, stripping every American in its jurisdiction of the right to make their own decisions on a matter of the highest moral and practical import. That's the antithesis of liberty.

POINT: Ukraine can win—here's how

By PETER DORAN
InsideSources.com

Peter B. Doran is a senior adjunct fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He wrote this for InsideSources.com.

Q: Can Ukraine win its war against Russia?

Ten years into Russia's long war against Ukraine, far too many Americans are falling prey to a destructive idea. They needlessly believe that Ukraine's defeat is unavoidable. These Americans have lost their bearings. Defeat is never inevitable so long as a nation is willing to fight. George Washington proved this when he crossed the Delaware River. His army refused to quit—and America prevailed. In 2024, the United States can enable Ukraine to win by making crucial changes that Russian president Vladimir Putin will detest.

First, let's bust some myths. Outgunned and outnumbered armies routinely overcome larger opponents. The Taliban outlasted Russia and the United States in Afghanistan. Ho Chi Minh defeated America and France in Vietnam. In his darkest hour, Churchill declared "never, never, never" to Adolf Hitler. Henry V ended the Hundred Years' War at Agincourt. And the list goes on.

Putin insists that he has studied history but demands that we ignore one of its most important lessons. Smaller armies regularly win long wars when they refuse to surrender—and the Ukrainians have the home-field advantage in this fight.

Next, there is the myth of Russia's inexhaustible manpower pool. Neither Russia nor Ukraine have yet to fully mobilize their populations, as England and France did during World War I and the United States during World War II. Kyiv may take this course soon, but it will only harden its population's resolve. Ukrainians know if they stop fighting, they face violent national extermination. They are highly motivated as a result.

Meanwhile, Putin fears fully mobilizing his people. He has steadfastly avoided this step despite Russia's catastrophic losses. Instead, the Kremlin has replaced its casualties in Ukraine with the country's provincial poor, its psychopaths and its prisoners during a previous, small-scale recruiting drive.

Some Russians are sounding off. They do not want their husbands and sons to die in Putin's Ukrainian meatgrinder. Russian polls confirm this view among the wider population. Total mobilization in Russia could imperil Putin's rule—and he knows it. Instead, Putin is betting on Western weakness. His strategy anticipates that befuddled Western leaders will tire of the war and appease him.

We can and must prove Putin wrong. Here's how.

For starters, the United States must provide a clear and compelling definition of victory in Ukraine that advances our national interests. The requirements of this victory include the Russian military ceasing to kill Ukrainians, departing Ukrainian territory and not threatening the existence of the country in the future.

Since February 2022, the Biden administration has never explained what victory should look like to the American public. It is an astonishing dereliction. However, such a threefold victory is possible for Ukraine. We should say that.

Next, we must strangle the Russian war machine. There is a major gap between America's rhetoric on Russian sanctions and reality. Moscow is exploiting the economic and oil loopholes that we created for them. We need to close the pipeline of money that is flooding into the Kremlin's coffers. That means ending exemptions like the G-7's "oil price cap" debacle and applying a maximum pressure campaign on Iran and Russia.

Finally, Congress must approve funding to keep Ukraine in the fight—including robust training for its soldiers. Meanwhile, the White House must end its maddening policy of "too little, too late" arms releases to Kyiv. The administration waited nearly a year and eight months to deliver 31 Abrams main battle tanks to Ukraine. The first deliveries of F-16 fighters will not arrive until this summer.

America continues to deny Ukraine access to precision strike capabilities like the ATACMS missile. This is despite repeated pleas by Republican and Democratic senators to do so.

Russia will not stop with Ukraine. If we fail to enable Ukraine's victory today, we invite endless conflict in Europe tomorrow. Ukrainians have demonstrated their willingness to die for their freedom. By making these three critical changes, Ukraine can and will win.

COUNTERPOINT: Ukraine can no longer win

By JOE BUCCINO
InsideSources.com

Joe Buccino is a research analyst at the Defense Innovation Board, a former communications director at U.S. Central Command and a retired U.S. Army colonel. He wrote this for InsideSources.com.

Q: Can Ukraine win its war against Russia?

As the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of the country to its west nears and the latest aid package for Ukraine stalls in Congress, we must be clear-eyed about the future: There is no path for Ukraine to win this war. American support will not change this reality.

Two years ago, the Ukrainian Armed Forces defied expectations immediately. Days before Russia's massive combined arms incursion at dawn on Feb. 24, 2022, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley, spoke for the U.S. military when he predicted to Congress that Kyiv would fall within 72 hours. Many military analysts similarly predicted that the Russian military would quickly rout the overmatched Ukrainian forces. American leaders encouraged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to leave the country lest Russian troops assassinate him.

These projections of immediate success for Russia misread the progress Ukrainian troops made in capability and readiness since Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. They also overestimated the Russian forces' readiness, air superiority and command cohesion.

One year ago, the people of Ukraine saw encouraging signs in their gruesome war with Russia from almost every corner. A year into Russia's massive invasion, Ukrainian forces were bloodied but held on to territory in the east in defiance of most expectations. Successful counteroffensives allowed Ukraine to regain territory in the south. Zelenskyy defiantly declared the coming year one of "our invincibility." American aid into the country offered a king's ransom in artillery and anti-tank weapons through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, and the flow seemed unceasing.

Inspired by Ukraine's stunning success against the much larger and more advanced military, the West galvanized behind Zelenskyy and his troops. Tragically, all these indicators led to unrealistic expectations.

Today, the situation is grim. The once dynamic fighting has slowed to a cruel slog—one that inures to Russia's favor as Ukraine runs low on troops and munitions while Russia maintains both in plenty. The long-planned, high-risk, months-long Ukrainian spring 2023 counteroffensive failed, with Ukraine unable to regain any territory seized by Russia. Support for Zelenskyy—in Ukraine and the West—has finally slipped. American aid is logjammed in Congress, and the United States seems tired of funding the war.

The reality after two years of fighting is that there is no path to victory for Ukraine—not in the sense of pushing Russian troops back to the pre-February 2022 lines of control. After Ukrainian troops abandoned Avdiivka— the most significant loss or gain by either side in nine months— following some of the war's heaviest fighting, almost all advantages accrue to Russia.

The seizure of Avdiivka does not materially change the war. Still, it is a damaging psychological blow that further shifts the momentum against Ukraine. Moscow can now throw mass in terms of bodies, tanks, artillery and drones at the exhausted Ukrainian forces until they crack. Ukraine is exhausted, and outnumbered, and struggling to recruit troops. The best Ukraine can do now is fight Russia to a negotiated settlement that allows sovereignty, territorial integrity and security from another Russian invasion. Even these provisions now seem unrealistic.

Russia also has the advantage of time. While Vladimir Putin can lead Russia along a single strategic trajectory regardless of the length of the war, the United States is subject to the whims of democracy: presidents and members of Congress change hands, voters grow weary of supporting other countries, and policies change.

In considering an aid package to Ukraine, U.S. policymakers and their constituents must assess how long the cash and weapons will continue to flow and toward what end. Getting to a favorable—or at least even—negotiated settlement will take more than a year of fighting. Putin has no incentive to stop fighting and every incentive to continue pushing and waiting for his adversaries to run out of troops and munitions, and policymakers in the U.S. to run out of patience.

None of this is fair to the people of Ukraine, who have placed their hopes of sovereignty on American commitment. It is, however, the tragic reality of the situation. The $60 billion aid package held up in Congress will not significantly change the future. This fight is a long haul that will require additional aid. The spigot will close at some point—perhaps soon—turning off aid and sealing Ukraine's fate.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Song lyrics: Civil Rights Songs 'We Shall Overcome'

LITERARY NOOK
By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

The U.S. Civil Rights Movement (1954 -1968) spawned many memorable protest songs and anthems, plus revived some older traditional songs. *If You Miss Me at the Back of the Bus* was written by Charles Neblett in response to desegregate a public swimming pool in Cairo, Illinois after a young African American man drowned while swimming in a local river due to the pool not allowing any African Americans to use it.

If You Miss Me at the Back of the Bus

If you miss me at the back of the bus you can't find me in there
Come on over to the front of the bus I'll be right in there
If you miss me on the picket line you can't find me'n all there
Come on over to the city jail I'll be roomed in up there
If you miss me in a Mississippi river you can't find me'n all in there
Come on over to the swimming pool I'll be swimming right thereß
If you miss me in the Carpentee you can't find me'n all there
Come on over to the color house I'll be voten right there…"

In 1965 Pete Seeger released a vinyl album titled *We Shall Overcome*. Several songs on it were being sung at Civil Rights rallies in the U.S. Among them: *Keep Your Eyes on the Prize, I Ain't Scared of Your Jail, Oh Freedom, That's What I Learned in School, Who Killed Davy Moore'* (a Bob Dylan song about a young Black boxer killed in a boxing ring), and the name of the album, an old traditional song, became a civil rights anthem:

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome some day
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome some day
We are not afraid, we are not afraid, we are not afraid today …
We are not alone, we are not alone, we are not alone today…
The truth will make us free, the truth will make us free …
We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand …
The Lord will see us through, the Lord will see us through …
Black and white together, black and white together …
We shall be free, we shall be free, we shall be free someday
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday.

(the lyrics are from a traditional song.)

DIPLOMACY

From page 6

liberty, they brought on a war which has ruined the lives of everyone in the Gaza Strip.

The long-suffering Palestinians must be freed from Hamas.

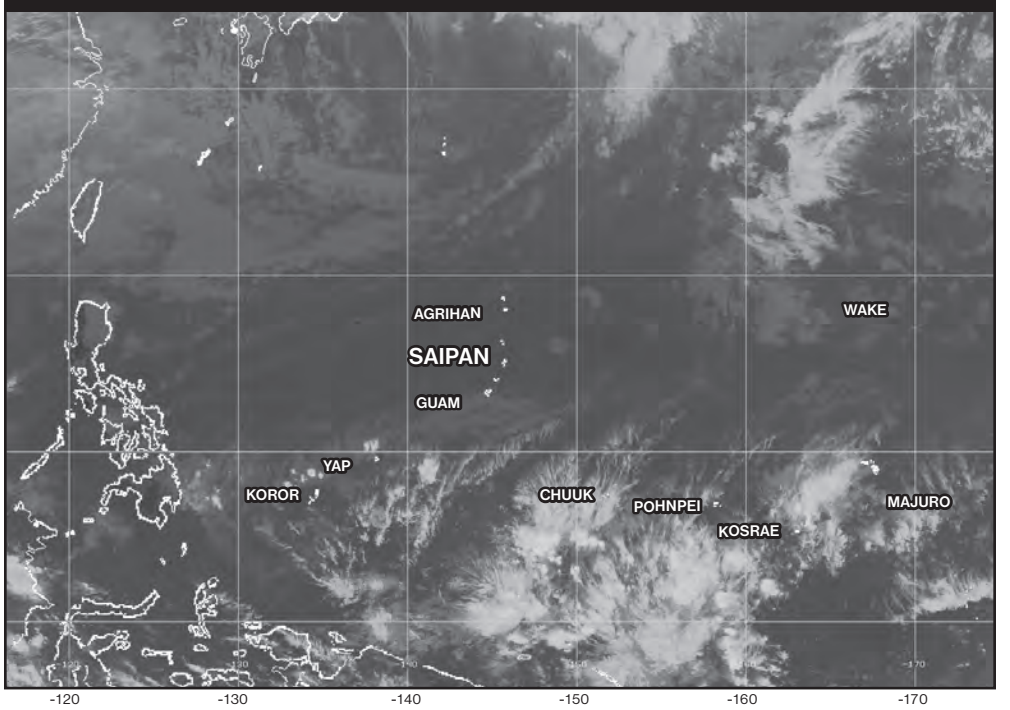
©2024 New York Daily News

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy. Isolated showers. northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.	Breezy through Friday night. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy through Friday night. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
85 75°	85 75°	85 75°	85 75°	85 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:40 AM MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Light to moderate northeasterlies prevail in the region. Satellite imagery indicates partly cloudy skies. Tanapag buoy indicates seas are near 4 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	84° / 78°
Chuuk	Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	85° / 80°
Kosrae	Cloudy	85° / 80°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	83° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:35 AM	6:23 PM
Wednesday	6:35 AM	6:24 PM
Thursday	6:34 AM	6:24 PM
Friday	6:34 AM	6:24 PM
Saturday	6:33 AM	6:24 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	7:00 AM	7:00 PM
Wednesday	-	7:34 AM	7:45 PM
Thursday	-	8:06 AM	8:31 PM
Friday	-	9:49 AM	10:55 PM
Saturday	-	10:29 AM	11:49 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Showers	73° / 61°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	41° / 21°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	70° / 57°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	80° / 64°
London	Cloudy	39° / 30°
Los Angeles	Showers	63° / 57°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	86° / 72°
Melbourne	Sunny	93° / 75°
Miami	Sunny	81° / 67°
New York	Rain	50° / 47°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	46° / 36°
Paris	Showers	50° / 36°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	48° / 34°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	61° / 39°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	73° / 51°
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	43° / 32°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	37° / 19°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	52° / 36°
Washington, DC	Rain	66° / 57°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:21 AM	Low Tide	0.16
9:35 AM	High Tide	1.68
3:48 PM	Low Tide	0.56
9:20 PM	High Tide	1.60

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3461	2:40PM	6:45PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3462	11:15PM	1:30PM+1	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3462	08:00AM	1:30PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

TTT welcomes 300 delegates to MICC on Saipan

Tåno Tåsi yan Todu welcomed more than 300 delegates from the community, academia, and governmental institutions in Guåhan, the CNMI, and abroad to the sixth Mariana Islands Conservation Conference being held on Saipan at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan from Feb. 26 to March 1.

As always, the event is free and open to the public and will be live-streamed.

Established in 2017, the conference was formerly called the "Marianas Terrestrial Conservation Conference." The conference focuses on a range of topics, including habitat restoration, species recovery, invasive species, forest ecology, and native bird conservation. This year, educators, students, and experts working on coral reef conservation and other marine topics will join in the discussions and presentations. To recognize the more expansive focus of the conference, it is now called the "Mariana Islands Conservation Conference."

The MICC was organized to foster collaboration and to share insights regarding conservation initiatives and projects. The weeklong event will include presentations of ongoing research and conservation initiatives, field trips, professional development workshops, and a career fair focused on jobs in conservation.

Beginning yesterday, Feb 26, the MICC featured experts discussing the recovery of bird species, forest habitats, and coral reefs, following the research presentations, students and faculty from the Northern Marianas College, University of Washington, Colorado State University, and the University of Guam.

Today, Feb 27, the MICC will hold a Professional Development Workshop from 12:30pm to 1:30pm. The workshop will match students and early-career professionals to discuss career paths, education requirements and qualifications, tactics to improve and build resumes, and opportunities to volunteer and gain experience for a career in conservation. The workshop will be followed by a job fair from 4pm to 5pm. More than 16 organizations will participate, including Friends of the Mariana Trench, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife, and MANGO (Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations). Members of the community, students, and individuals interested in a career in conservation are encouraged to attend both events.

Later in the week, on Wednesday, participants registered to attend the conference will join experts in the field, on Rota, Tinian, and Saipan, to participate in a survey of *fanihi* and to support a bird misnetting project. Others will join 500 Sails on the water, or will learn about traditional medicine from master healer Donald Mendiola, or one of the other several field trips coordinated for registered participants.

On Friday, Feb 29, TTT is excited to feature three scientists from the islands of Micronesia for the closing plenary panel. Dr. Harmony Yomai is from Chuuk and Yap, and obtained a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Tennessee, in 2021. Since completing her studies, Yomai was selected as a post-doctoral research associate at Iowa State University and Virginia Tech's Ecology Bird Loss Project. Dr. Ann Marie Gawel is a Chuukese woman, who was born in Pohnpei and grew up on Guåhan. Currently, she is David H. Smith Conservation Research Fellow, studying ecological and societal values of natural resources, with a focus on Micronesian forest resources. Dr. Nicole Yamase grew up in Palau, Saipan and Chuuk and Pohnpei, and recently obtained a Ph.D. in Marine Biology, at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In 2021, Yamase became the first Pacific Islander and the third woman to visit Challenger Deep, the deepest known part of the Mariana Trench. She is currently the director of Impact at One Reef.

TTT would like to thank the Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program, Sedgwick County Zoo, Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography, Saint Louis Zoo, the Guam Economic Development Authority, Nihi Indigenous Media, Blue Ocean Law, and Camacho and Taitano LLP Attorneys at Law for their generous support.

To register for the conference, and to learn more about the annual MICC, visit: https://www.marianasterrestrialconservation.org and email tanotasitodu@gmail.com for questions and further discussions about the event. ***(PR)***

Radewagen urges prompt passage of the COFA Amendments Act of 2023 for Pacific security

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) continues to emphasize the urgency of completing passage of the COFA agreements legislation as an integral part of the security of the Pacific region. On Thursday, she spoke with Speaker Mike Johnson to convey her viewpoint as a member of Congress from the region.

"I was pleased that the speaker told me he recognizes the urgency of this matter and said it's getting priority attention," she said.

Also, this week she took part in a bipartisan letter to the speaker urging the inclusion of the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2023, H.J. Res. 96, a bill which Radewagen cosponsored, in the next available legislative vehicle.

"The Compacts of Free Association include non-expiring provisions securing vital defense rights in strategically critical areas of the Pacific increasingly contested by the People's Republic of China," members state in the letter.

As ahairman of the Natural Resources Committee's Indo-Pacific Task Force, Radewagen took part in leading the congressional examination of the legislation and related issues, followed by successful passage of the Act by the Committee under Chairman Bruce Westerman.

The letter, led by Congressman Steve Womack (R-AK) and Congressman Ed Case (D-HI) included the signatures of 48 Members of Congress, and states: "The COFA are the cornerstone of U.S. presence in the Pacific Islands and have been recognized as strategically critical by numerous national security documents, including the 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy. The PRC currently is waging political warfare to expand its influence and disrupt friendly relations throughout the region, making our deep and enduring partnerships with these nations more critical than ever. Senior officials from the Department of State and the Department of Defense repeatedly emphasized in congressional hearings how crucial these relationships are to U.S. presence and operations in the Indo-Pacific."

Radewagen is also an original cosponsor of the Pacific Partnership Act, sponsored by Case, that builds on strengthening U.S. engagement in the Pacific Islands region, in another key congressional effort that dovetails with finalizing COFA as U.S. policy.

Citizens of the three Freely Associated States—the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau—serve in the U.S. military as well as reside in the United States. These island nations comprise a combined area of the Pacific waters the size of the continental United States, and are a major element of the strategic stability of the region.

The letter continues, "Failing to ratify these agreements negotiated in good faith would be the most self-destructive gift the United States could give to the PRC in the Pacific, damaging U.S. credibility and deterrent capability in the FAS and the larger community of Pacific Island nations. Indeed, the delay in approval of the COFA stands in contrast to PRC success in establishing diplomatic relations with Solomon Islands in 2019 and more recently the Republic of Nauru.

"Pacific Island nations understandably view these agreements as litmus tests for United States partnership. They are watching to see if we will follow through on our commitments, and should we fail, the PRC will further exploit that vacuum with further intervention and disruption rather than open and lawful competition. As a result, a broad coalition has openly urged Congress to pass these agreements into law: this includes the Heritage Foundation, the Select Committee for Strategic Competition with the Chinese Communist Party, and the Administration.

They conclude, "Each day that we do not pass this legislation into law is an opportunity missed, and an opening for our enemies to sow doubt about our viability as a partner and our strength as an ally. With so much at stake in the Indo-Pacific, we urge you to include this legislation in any available vehicle." ***(PR)***

GCC to host Spring Bazaar on March 23 and 24

Guam Community College is calling local vendors and food trucks to participate in the first ever "GCC Spring Bazaar" on March 23 and 24 from 8am to 2pm in GCC's new Multipurpose Auditorium (Building 300).

» **Proceeds will benefit GCC Student Scholarships**

All proceeds from vendor fees will go toward GCC student scholarships.

Participation will be limited to one vendor per brand, per day (i.e., Scentsy, Tupperware, Thirty-One, etc.). Participation will be on a first come, first served basis and vendors may participate on both days. There are 30 tables open to vendors. Vendor space is 6 feet by 9 feet and cost $35 for one day or $50 for both Saturday and Sunday. Each space comes with one six-foot table and two chairs; an extra table will be made available for an additional $10 per day.

Food truck vending fee is $50 per day, and per vendor. Space is limited to five food trucks per day.

Interested vendors are asked to email trina.sanagustin@guamcc.edu or call (671) 735-5516 extension 5405. Payments must be made by 5pm, Friday, March 15, 2024 to confirm reservations. Vendors must provide a valid business license. Food truck vendors are asked to provide proof of insurance, Department of Public Health sanitary permit, business license, and a full menu.

About GCC scholarships

Guam Community College has multiple scholarships available for new and current GCC students. The scholarships will pay for tuition, books, and fees. For a full list of available GCC scholarships please visit GuamCC.edu/Scholarships. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa), left, with CNMI Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP).

Business

TOKYO café brings specialty brew to Saipan

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Takakazu Saishu-Castro opened TOKYO café in September 2022 to finally bring what he describes as Japanese specialty coffee to Saipan's coffee connoisseurs.

He said people on island usually only think of coffee as dark with a mild bitter taste but specialty coffee has so much flavors.

"Coffee beans come from a fruit and is actually a cherry so naturally it should've a fruity taste like berries and sometimes like honey and orange. It's just the roasting that makes it acidic and bitter," he said.

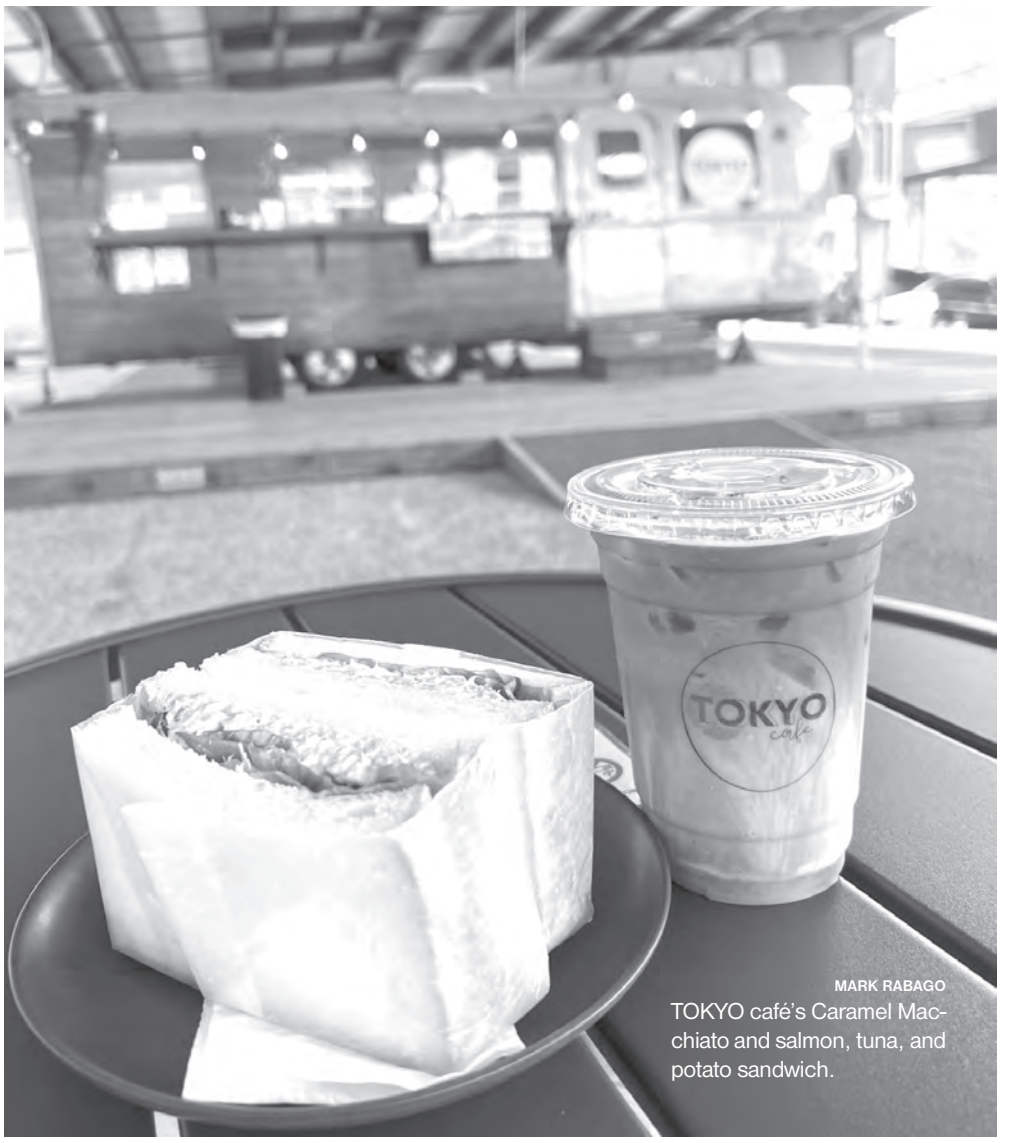
Just some of the myriad of hot coffee flavors Saishu-Castro and his staff offer at TOKYO café include, French Press, Americano, Caffe Latte, Cappuccino, Soy/Oat Latte, Honey Latte, and everyone's favorite, Caramel Macchiato.

"Coffee has so many flavor profiles—chocolate, nutty, floral, honey, orange, berry... a lot. And there's the usual dark roast like the chocolate and nuts and the light roast like the flower, honey, blueberry, lychee, and honey," he said.

Aside from hot coffee, they also serve an assortment of specialty hot tea, iced coffee, iced tea latte, and their quirky shake with ice cream. Saishu-Castro thinks that they're one of the only establishments on island that sells the latter.

As for snacks, TOKYO café offers two kinds of sandwiches—the always reliable ham & cheese and the surprisingly delectable salmon, tuna, and potato—as well as a variety of vegetarian plant-based pastries like scones and cookies.

Saishu-Castro, who worked as a barista, trainer, and manager of a coffee shop in Tokyo for more than 10 years before moving to the CNMI, said their location aboard a converted Airstream at the covered parking lot of Marianas Business Plaza has also attracted its fair share of local customers.



MARK RABAGO
TOKYO café's Caramel Macchiato and salmon, tuna, and potato sandwich.

MARK RABAGO
Maki Ono and Takakazu Saishu-Castro happily serves customers.

MARK RABAGO
TOKYO café is located in the covered parking lot of Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe.

MARK RABAGO
From left, TOKYO café staff Maki Ono and Laurence Abad and owner Takakazu Saishu-Castro.

"Local customers are slowly getting to know TOKYO café, but we need more tourist customers," said the Chiba, Japan native.

TOKYO café offers al fresco dining for 15 customers and also has a loyalty stamp card (nine stamps gives you a free cup). It also imports seasonal "guest beans" from Japan to allow customers to sample their new brew.

They're open Monday-Friday from 7:30am to 5:30pm and Saturday from 8:30am to 2pm and closed on Sunday and holidays. For more information, call (670) 286-7763. TOKYO café is also on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

Economists raise expectations for US economy in 2024

NEW YORK (AP)—This year looks to be a much better one for the U.S. economy than business economists were forecasting just a few months ago, according to a survey released Monday.

The economy looks set to grow 2.2% this year after adjusting for inflation, according to the National Association for Business Economics. That's up from the 1.3% that economists from universities, businesses and investment firms predicted in the association's prior survey, which was conducted in November.

It's the latest signal of strength for an economy that's blasted through predictions of a recession. High interest rates meant to get inflation under control were supposed to drag down the economy, the thinking went. High rates put the brakes on the economy, such as by making mortgages and credit card bills more expensive, in hopes of starving inflation of its fuel.

But even with rates very high, the job market and U.S. household spending have remained remarkably resilient. That in turn has raised expectations going forward. Ellen Zentner, chief U.S. economist at Morgan Stanley and president of the NABE, said a wide range of factors are behind the 2024 upgrade, including spending by both the government and households.

Economists also more than doubled their estimates for the number of jobs gained across the economy this year, though it would still likely be down from the previous one.

Offering another boost is the fact that inflation has been cooling since its peak two summers ago.

While prices are higher than customers would like, they're not increasing as quickly as they were before. Inflation has slowed enough that most of the surveyed forecasters expect interest rate cuts to begin by mid-June.

The Federal Reserve, which is in charge of setting short-term rates, has said it will likely cut them several times this year. That would relax the pressure on the economy, while goosing prices for stocks and other investments.

Of course, rate changes take a notoriously long time to snake through the economy and take full effect. That means past hikes, which began two years ago, could still ultimately tip the economy into a recession.

In its survey, NABE said 41% of respondents cited high rates as the most significant risk to the economy. That was more than double any other response, including fears of a possible credit crunch or a broadening of the wars in Ukraine or the Middle East.

Consumers are increasingly pushing against price hikes—and winning

WASHINGTON (AP)—Inflation has changed the way many Americans shop. Now, those changes in consumer habits are helping bring down inflation.

Fed up with prices that remain about 19%, on average, above where they were before the pandemic, consumers are fighting back. In grocery stores, they're shifting away from name brands to store-brand items, switching to discount stores or simply buying fewer items like snacks or gourmet foods.

More Americans are buying used cars, too, rather than new, forcing some dealers to provide discounts on new cars again. But the growing consumer pushback to what critics condemn as price-gouging has been most evident with food as well as with consumer goods like paper towels and napkins.

In recent months, consumer resistance has led large food companies to respond by sharply slowing their price increases from the peaks of the past three years. This doesn't mean grocery prices will fall back to their levels of a few years ago, though with some items, including eggs, apples and milk, prices are below their peaks. But the milder increases in food prices should help further cool overall inflation, which is down sharply from a peak of 9.1% in 2022 to 3.1%.

Public frustration with prices has become a central issue in President Joe Biden's bid for re-election. Polls show that despite the dramatic decline in inflation, many consumers are unhappy that prices remain so much higher than they were before inflation began accelerating in 2021.

Nation

Biden summons congressional leaders to talk Ukraine, government funding

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden will convene the top four congressional leaders at the White House on Tuesday to press lawmakers on passing an emergency aid package for Ukraine and Israel, as well as averting a looming government shutdown next month, according to a White House official.

The top four leaders include House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

During the meeting, the president will discuss the "urgency" of passing the aid package, which has bipartisan support, as well as legislation to keep the federal government operating through the end of September, said the White House official, who was granted anonymity to discuss a meeting not yet publicly confirmed.

The Republican-led House is under pressure to pass the $95 billion national security package that bolsters aid for Ukraine, Israel as well as the Indo-Pacific. That legislation cleared the Senate on a 70-29 vote earlier this month, but Johnson has been resistant to putting up the aid bill for a vote in the House.

"This is one of those instances where one person can bend the course of history. Speaker Johnson, if he put this bill on the floor, would produce a strong, bipartisan majority vote in favor of the aid to Ukraine," Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

Sullivan stressed that Ukrainians need weapons and ammunition to fend off Russian forces, and that in his personal conversations with the speaker, he "has indicated that he would like to get the funding for Ukraine."

Separate from the national security package, the first tranche of government funding is due to expire Friday. The rest of the federal government, including agencies such as the Pentagon, Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, expires on March 8.

In a letter to his colleagues sent Sunday, Schumer said there was not yet an agreement to avoid a partial shutdown of the agencies whose funding expires this week. That includes the departments of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture and Veterans Affairs.

"While we had hoped to have legislation ready this weekend that would give ample time for members to review the text, it is clear now that House Republicans need more time to sort themselves out," Schumer wrote in the letter. The Senate majority leader called on Johnson to "step up to once again buck the extremists in his caucus and do the right thing" by greenlighting funding to keep the government open.

Johnson said Schumer's letter was "counterproductive" and said Democrats were pushing their own unrealistic policy demands.

"This is not a time for petty politics," Johnson said in a statement. "House Republicans will continue to work in good faith and hope to reach an outcome as soon as possible, even as we continue to insist that our own border security must be addressed immediately."

Warm weather brings taste of spring to central and western United States

OMAHA, Neb. (AP)—A warm front swept springlike weather across a large swath of the country Sunday in what is usually one of the coldest months of the year, sending people out of their homes to enjoy the rare winter respite but also bringing increased wildfire danger.

In Omaha, Nebraska, the temperature Sunday broke 65 degrees (18.3 degrees Celsius) on a day when the average high temperature is around the freezing mark, according to the National Weather Service.

"Omaha is having its second warmest February on record in its 154-year history of tracking weather," National Weather Service meteorologist Michaela Wood said Sunday. "And there's a chance of beating the record yet tomorrow, when we're looking at a high temperature of around 80."

The sunny warmth brought Stacy Lawson, and her husband, Hugh Lawson, of Omaha, outside for a game of pickleball with friends. But they weren't the only ones.

"Outdoor courts are prime real estate when it's warm," Stacy Lawson said. "The first one we tried was already filled."

The Lawsons and their competitors, Tim and Andrea Driscoll, had a hard time remembering the last year they were able to play outside in February.

"In Nebraska, February is both the shortest and longest month of the year," Tim Driscoll deadpanned.

While the warmer-than-usual temperatures may have provided a break from harsh winter conditions, it didn't come without some concerns. The National Weather Service cited the warmth, along with low humidity, winds gusting more than 35 mph (56 kph) in places, and dry winter vegetation in issuing fire danger alerts in an area stretching across parts of 11 states.

Red flag warnings and fire weather watches were issued in parts of New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma, up to Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and east to Iowa, Illinois and Missouri. Nearby states, including parts of Arkansas, Minnesota and Wisconsin, were issued hazardous weather outlooks because of an increased fire danger, according to weather service maps.

Grass fires were reported in the Colorado Springs, Colorado, area on Sunday as a red flag warning was in effect for much of the eastern part of the state.

A fire has burned approximately 3 square miles (2.6 square kilometers) of land at the Fort Carson Army post south of Colorado Springs. The fire started in an area where artillery can land or hand grenades and guns are used in training exercises, said spokesperson John Switzer. The cause of the fire is under investigation, and no buildings were immediately threatened.

A much smaller brush fire was burning on the grounds of the U.S. Air Force Academy north of Colorado Springs, spokesperson Katherine Spessa said. No buildings are threatened, but some pre-evacuation instructions were being given, she said.

World

Israel vows to target Hezbollah

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL (AP)—Israel's defense minister vowed Sunday to step up attacks on Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group even if a cease-fire is reached with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Hezbollah, which has been exchanging fire with Israel throughout the war in Gaza, has said it will halt its nearly daily attacks on Israel if a cease-fire is reached in Gaza.

But Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that anyone who thinks a temporary cease-fire for Gaza will also apply to the northern front is "mistaken."

"We will continue the fire, and we will do so independently from the south, until we achieve our goals," Gallant said. He said there is a simple aim: to push Hezbollah away from the Israeli border, either through a diplomatic agreement or by force.

Hezbollah began striking Israel almost immediately after Hamas triggered the fighting in Gaza with a deadly attack along Israel's southern border from the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7. Tens of thousands of civilians on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border have been displaced by the continued cycle of Hezbollah rocket and missile attacks and Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire.

AP

Israeli female paramedic soldiers take cover from the wind made by a landing military helicopter during an exercise simulating evacuation of wounded people in northern Israel, near the border with Lebanon, Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024.

» Even if cease-fire reached with Hamas in Gaza

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said in a speech earlier this month that the group would adhere to a cease-fire in southern Lebanon if a cease-fire should be reached in Gaza. But he said it would resume and escalate attacks if Israel continued to strike in Lebanon after any agreement with Hamas.

A Lebanese security official said Sunday that five Hezbollah members were killed in two separate Israeli airstrikes on trucks in the border area between Lebanon and Syria. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to share the information with journalists. Hezbollah announced that three of its fighters had been killed, but did not say where.

The Israeli military did not acknowledge the strikes on the Lebanon-Syria border but announced that it had struck several sites in southern Lebanon in response to missile launches and that it targeted a "terrorist cell" in the town of Blida.

Gallant said Israel's targeting of Hezbollah commanders has significantly weakened the group's ability to attack Israel.

Moscow ally Serbia cracks down on anti-war Russians living in the Balkan country

ROGACA, Serbia (AP)—When Elena Koposova signed an open letter against Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she didn't expect a backlash in her newly adopted home state of Serbia.

After all, Serbia is formally seeking to join the European Union while adopting all the democratic values that go along with the membership, she thought. Now, she sees she was wrong.

Two years after signing the letter, the 54-year-old Russian woman is appealing an expulsion order after she was declared a threat to the national security of Serbia and her residency permit was revoked. The beleaguered literature translator said the only reason she could think of is the anti-war petition that she had signed.

"I am not an activist, but I did sign an anti-war letter when the Russian aggression in Ukraine just started," she said in an interview. "Even not being an activist, I couldn't just be quiet about it. So, I just put my name on the open letter where it was said that the war is a crime, and we must all unite to stop it."

Koposova is not alone. Serbia opened its borders in recent years to tens of thousands of Russians fleeing the government of President Vladimir Putin and the war in Ukraine. Russian pro-democracy activists in the Balkan country now say at least a dozen recently faced entry bans or had their residency permits revoked on grounds that they pose a threat to Serbia's security.

At least eight others are afraid to speak publicly about their legal problems with the Serbian authorities, fearing it could only jeopardize their chance of remaining in the country together with their families, Russian anti-war campaigners say.

"It was very sudden, very shocking," Koposova said of the moment she received the expulsion order, which did not explain the reason for the measure, only declaring that she poses "a threat to national security" and that she must leave the country within 30 days.

She and her husband have built a modern house on a piece of land in a remote village outside Belgrade where they live with two children, ages 6 and 14, who are attending local school and preschool classes.

Rights activists say the residency problems point to a close relation between Serbia's increasingly autocratic president, Aleksandar Vučić, and Putin, despite Serbia's formal EU bid. Vučić has refused to join Western sanctions against the traditional Slavic ally while allowing Moscow propaganda outlets such as RT and Sputnik to spread their narrative throughout the Balkans.

Life & Style

‘One Love’ gets more love at box office; at No. 1 spot in 2nd week

LOS ANGELES (AP)—For a second straight week, biopic “ Bob Marley: One Love “ continues to exceed expectations by claiming the No. 1 spot at the box office, overcoming two debut films and Sony’s “Madame Web” that’s still producing subpar numbers.

The Paramount film starring Kingsley Ben-Adir pulled in $13.5 million during its second week of release. The project, which was produced for about $70 million, already eclipsed that mark, grossing nearly $72 million domestically in North America.

It’s an impressive achievement for the Reinaldo Marcus Green-directed Marley’s musical biopic that’s focused on the Rastafarian legend’s story during the making of his 1977 album “Exodus” while leading up to his impactful concert in his native Jamaica.

AP

This image released by Paramount Pictures shows producer Ziggy Marley, left, and Kingsley Ben-Adir on the set of “Bob Marley: One Love.”

“Some of his greatest hits came out nearly 50 years ago, but his music still resonates through this film,” said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for data firm Comscore.

“One Love” drew nearly $2 million more than “Demon Slayer: Kimetsu No Yaiba - To the Hashira Training” which placed No. 2. The latest installment in the Japanese anime series from Crunchyroll and Sony debuted with $11.7 million.

“Demon Slayer” scored the impressive opening number from only 1,949 locations—far less than “One Love” with 3,597 and 3,020 for “ Ordinary Angels “—a faith-based Lionsgate film starring Hilary Swank that placed third at the box office with an estimated $6.5 million.

“There might not be any huge blockbuster films recently, but there some real gems out there for moviegoers to see,” Dergarabedian said.

All three of those films outperformed better than “ Madame Web,” which has struggled to find its footing after the superhero movie flopped last week. It was thought the Spider-Man spinoff would draw strong numbers—especially with Dakota Johnson starring as the film’s lead Marvel character.

But so far, it hasn’t lived up to the hype, producing just $6 million in its second week and grossing a little more than a disappointing $35 million.

After its 10th weekend, Universal’s animated “ Migration “ rounded out the top five with $3 million, bringing its domestic total to $120 million. “ Argylle “ placed sixth with $2.8 million barely outpacing “ Wonka,” which reeled in $2.5 million. Paul King’s musical starring Timothée Chalamet as a young Willy Wonka has grossed more than $214 million after 11 weeks.

The Ethan Coen-directed “ Drive Away Dolls “ debuted eighth with $2.4 million ahead of “ The Beekeeper “ and “The Chosen” season four, a Christian series focused on Jesus Christ.

Dergarabedian called this past week a slow one. But next week, he expects it’ll pick up greatly with the highly anticipated “ Dune: Part Two “ making its long-waited debut, which should end the top spot reign by “One Love.”

“It’s the calm before the sandstorm,” he said.

- “Bob Marley: One Love,” $13.5 million.
- “”Demon Slayer: Kimetsu No Yaiba - To the HashiraTraining,” $11.5 million.
- “Ordinary Angels,” $6.5 million.
- “Madame Web,” $6 million.
- “Migration,” $3 million.
- “Argylle,” $2.8 million.
- “Wonka,” $2.5 million.
- “Drive-Away Dolls,” $2.4 million.
- 9. “The Beekeeper,” $1.9 million.
- 10. “The Chosen,” Episodes 4-6, $1.7 million.

AT INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS

‘Past Lives,’‘American Fiction’ and ‘The Holdovers’ are big winners

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

Celine Song’s quiet romance “Past Lives” won two of the biggest awards at the Film Independent Spirit Awards Sunday afternoon, including best feature and best director. Other big winners were Cord Jefferson’s comedic satire “ American Fiction,” with Jeffrey Wright winning for lead performer; and Alexander Payne’s “ The Holdovers,” which won prizes for Da’Vine Joy Randolph and Dominic Sessa.

The 39th edition of the show was held Sunday in a beachside tent in Santa Monica, California, and streamed live on IMDb and Film Independent’s YouTube channels and X accounts.

“Thank you so much for letting me share what it feels like to be human, to love and be loved, and thank you for loving our film,” Song said in accepting the directing prize.

Her film was among the top nominated at the show, alongside “May December,” which won only one award (for Samy Burch’s first screenplay) and “American Fiction,” which fared better.

Wright won for playing a frustrated author who becomes wildly successful by writing something he hates in “American Fiction.”

“You go to these awards shows, you kind of grow tired of them,” Wright said. “And then you get one, and it kind of changes the vibe a little bit.”

He noted that it was made independently because “nobody wanted to finance it.”

The Spirit Awards sit firmly within the larger Hollywood awards season, which culminates with the Oscars on March 10. But with a budget cap of $20 million for nominees, the show celebrates films that sometimes go unheralded, or at least undernominated, at the bigger shows.

“Welcome to the Film Independent Spirit Awards, also known as the bisexual oscars,” host Aidy Bryant said. Bryant called it “the only place in the world where $20 million is like no money.”

Man’s chronic unemployment creates doubt for future

DEAR ABBY: I’m a 32-year-old woman who has been with my boyfriend, my first and only partner, for 11 years. Overall, our relationship is healthy. He’s smart, kind, supportive, caring, loyal and funny. I can see us getting married and living a happy life together.

The problem is, aside from a few short-term gigs, he hasn’t had a job for the last six years, when he left his office job to move with me for my career. I’ve done well. But although he has applied for all sorts of jobs—sales, admin, medical, police, government, fast food—no one has hired him.

Last year, he developed a heart condition, and he can no longer perform physical labor. He also suffers from depression. So, I’ve been paying for nearly everything. I’m lucky not to have credit card debt, but at age 32, I have no retirement savings. My job barely covers living expenses for us and our pets.

I want to progress in life and have an equal partner. We’ve discussed marriage, and I think he’s “the one.” But how long should I hold out hope of him finding a job? Do I just keep on hoping, or do I consider ending things and breaking both our hearts?

BURDENED IN FLORIDA

DEAR BURDENED: Has it occurred to you that the reason the man you love has been unable to find employment all this time may be connected to his depression? It would benefit you both if he consulted a doctor and sought treatment for it. Free and low-cost counseling is available through the county, as well as through colleges and universities with departments of psychology. Please explore this before ending your relationship because it could be the solution to your problem.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My sister has become very interested in Zen meditation. I’m afraid she has become obsessed with it. She spent a week at a special meditation workshop during which she said she meditated all day, every day to the point that her back hurt from sitting so much. She’s now saying she wants to become a Zen priest, which necessitates spending three months at a Zen center meditating constantly.

My sister has a husband and two teenage daughters I think she’s neglecting. She earned a master’s degree in economics at a prestigious university but works only part time as a bookkeeper to allow more time for her Zen center.

How can I politely persuade her to focus on her family and career, and let Zen meditation be her hobby rather than the focus of her life?

PRIORITIES IN THE WEST

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR PRIORITIES: Your sister is an adult, intelligent and capable of making her own decision about the path in life she chooses. Nowhere did you state that her husband and children disagree with it. I do not think your input on this subject, regardless of how “politely” you offer it, will be welcomed. Keep your opinion to yourself unless asked for it.

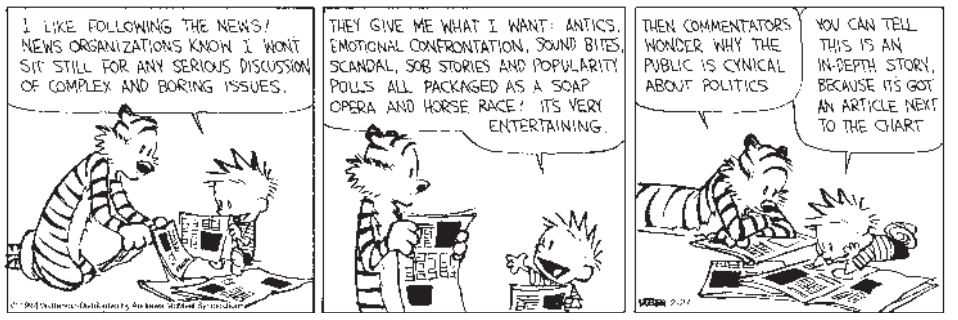
■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby’s most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

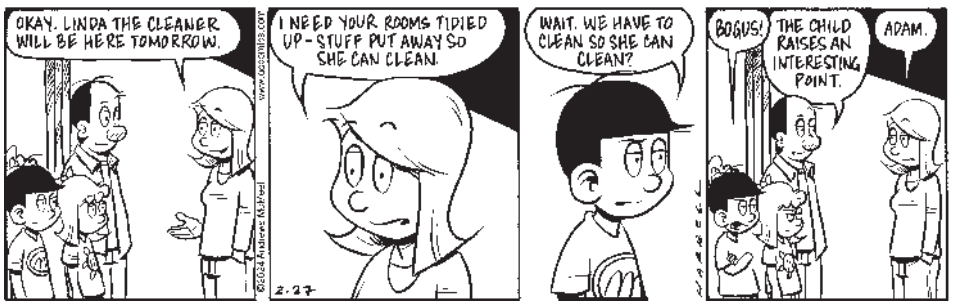

I LIKE FOLLOWING THE NEWS! NEWS ORGANIZATIONS KNOW I WON'T SIT STILL FOR ANY SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF COMPLEX AND BORING ISSUES.
THEY GIVE ME WHAT I WANT: ANTICS, EMOTIONAL CONFRONTATION, SOUND BITES, SCANDAL, SOB STORIES AND POPULARITY POLLS ALL PACKAGED AS A SOAP OPERA AND HORSE RACE! ITS VERY ENTERTAINING.
THEN COMMENTATORS WONDER WHY THE PUBLIC IS CYNICAL ABOUT POLITICS
YOU CAN TELL THIS IS AN IN-DEPTH STORY, BECAUSE ITS GOT AN ARTICLE NEXT TO THE CHART

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

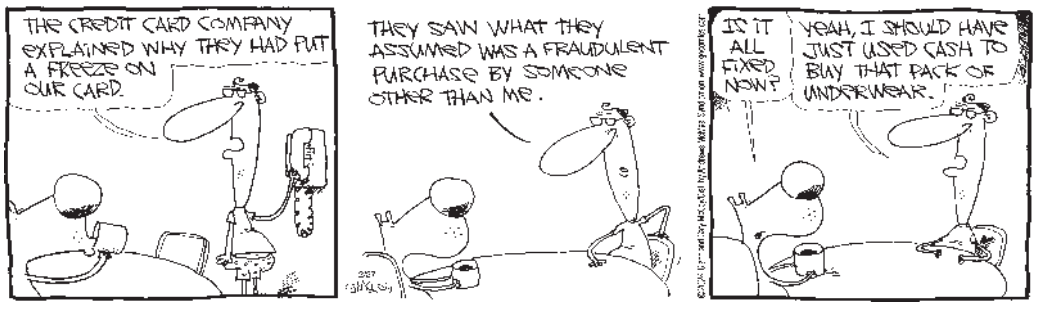
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


OKAY. LINDA THE CLEANER WILL BE HERE TOMORROW.
I NEED YOUR ROOMS TIDIED UP - STUFF PUT AWAY SO SHE CAN CLEAN.
WAIT. WE HAVE TO CLEAN SO SHE CAN CLEAN?
BOGUS!
THE CHILD RAISES AN INTERESTING POINT.
ADAM.
2-27

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


THE CREDIT CARD COMPANY EXPLAINED WHY THEY HAD PUT A FREEZE ON OUR CARD.
THEY SAW WHAT THEY ASSUMED WAS A FRAUDULENT PURCHASE BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN ME.
IS IT ALL FIXED NOW?
YEAH, I SHOULD HAVE JUST USED CASH TO BUY THAT PACK OF UNDERWEAR.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Volition
5 Melville captain
9 Beer container
12 "The Wire" actor Idris
13 Tire
14 "I love," in Latin
15 Windbags
17 Whitman of "Good Girls"
18 Gospel writer
19 Suit material
21 Remote locations?
24 Tiers
25 Roasting spot
26 Luminous larva
30 Series of battles
31 Appears
32 Asian language
33 Sarcastic bit of applause
35 Coop group
36 Dove calls
37 Exams
38 Fleeting
40 Curly cabbage
42 Tic-tac-toe win
43 Power-Point diagram
48 Vichy water
49 Top-of-the-line
50 Bone-dry
51 Train lines (Abbr.)
52 Frog's kin
53 Bankrolls

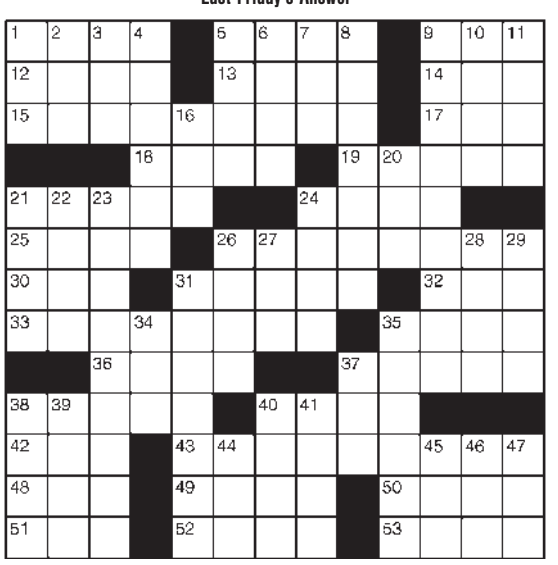
DOWN

1 Entanglement
2 Under the weather
3 Wall St. deal
4 Wyatt Earp, for one
5 Off in the distance
6 "Listen!"
7 Annex
8 Gives
9 Lingerie items
10 Lawyer Clooney
11 Yuletide tune
16 Possesses
20 URL part
21 Scatters seeds
22 Elliptical
23 Supremely fierce
24 Easy win
26 Hair products
27 Grazing land
28 Harangue
29 Green shade
31 Deride
34 Misery
35 Donkey sound
37 Patient's need, briefly
38 Dutch word for "farmer"
39 Lion's greeting
40 Coffee-growing area of Hawaii
41 Dumbstruck
44 Bathroom, to a Londoner
45 Coach Parseghian
46 Free (of)
47 Super Bowl stats

Solution time: 22 mins.

G	A	S		E	B	O	N		S	I	R	I
O	T	T		L	O	R	E		I	R	I	S
P	E	R	F	E	C	T	O		M	A	L	I
			O	L	G	A			T	I	N	E
H	A	I	F	Y		T	A	I	I			
F	I	I	F		P	F	R	C	F	I	V	E
M	O	E		R	E	A	M	S		N	I	N
J	E	R	F	O	R	M	S		C	C	C	I
			O	P	U	S		C	O	O	E	D
S	H	A	D	L			P	H	A	M		
I	A	P	D		P	F	R	O	X	I	D	F
E	R	S	E		A	M	O	S		N	I	I
D	E	E	R		M	U	S	S		C	P	A

Last Friday's Answer



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jenny Boyd, 33; Josh Groban, 43; Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas, 53; Donal Logue, 58.

Happy Birthday: A resourceful approach to using your skills, gifts and experience will help you expand your knowledge and qualifications. Be receptive, but don't make changes based on hearsay. Ask your best friend if you want to make wise decisions. Use your ingenuity to achieve goals that are dedicated to self-improvement and building solid relationships. Your numbers are 9, 13, 23, 25, 31, 36, 44.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Call someone you trust to give you hands-on help. A physical outlet will relieve tension and give you time to assess a situation or decision you must make. Address a partnership issue that has the potential to improve your lifestyle. Let your actions speak for you. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Indecisiveness will plague you. Think matters through before you act. Observation, listening and firsthand information are your best plans of attack. Anger and disappointment become problematic if you give someone a chance to interfere. Think twice before you share personal information with a colleague. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Learn all you can before you start something new. Check your sources for validity first. Time is on your side, and doubt is your warning sign to sit tight. Maintain integrity, and abide by the rules and regulations to avoid penalties. Protect against illness. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Control your emotions. Put your energy into learning something exciting or taking a step in a direction that gives your creative side free rein to explore the possibilities. Don't let your attachment to someone lead to poor financial decisions. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Share your thoughts and feelings instead of letting others choose. It's OK to take a pass or look in a different direction. Assess your situation and adjust to suit your needs. Don't waste time worrying about the decisions others make. Do your own thing. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Don't spend on things you don't need. Pay attention to how you look and feel. Start an exercise regimen or update your appearance. A new look will boost your confidence and give you a fresh start. Address partnership ground rules before agreeing to participate. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Participation will lift you and motivate you to make positive adjustments at home and to your lifestyle. Although change is warranted, a budget will be necessary if you wish to maintain your status quo. Update your image. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: A premature change will leave you in limbo. Map out your course of action before you make a move. A situation at home will require patience, discipline and a well-thought-out plan. Don't underestimate someone who challenges you. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Don't give someone the freedom to decide for you. Stay in control, set high standards and live within your means. Let your actions speak for you, and you'll avoid getting into a dispute with someone trying to dismantle your plans. Follow your heart. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Updates will influence the outcome of something you are working toward. Before you move forward, check the information you have on file and adjust costs or interest rates. Don't take shortcuts that can lead to miscalculations. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Deal with important matters first. Set a budget and stick to your plans. Don't let outside influences tempt you to get involved in something that isn't in your best interest. Take the initiative, be creative and launch what's affordable and makes the most sense. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Tidy up, plan and budget, and prepare to turn your objective into a reality. Source the cost and adjust your plans to avoid debt. When dealing with authority figures, partners and institutions, keep your emotions in check. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are passionate, prominent and protective. You are alluring and insistent.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

7		8		1	6			9
			8	3			6	4
	2		4		5	7		
5	3			2	9	8		
	8	9		7	3			
2		7	5		8	3		6
4	6	5	9	8	2			
	7							
	9					6		8

Difficulty: ★★ 2/27

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

3	5	9	1	4	2	7	6	8
1	6	8	5	7	9	2	4	3
2	7	4	8	3	6	9	5	1
6	8	5	9	2	1	4	3	7
7	4	2	3	6	5	8	1	9
9	3	1	7	8	4	6	2	5
5	9	6	2	1	7	3	8	4
4	1	3	6	9	8	5	7	2
8	2	7	4	5	3	1	9	6

Difficulty: ★ 2/26

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

CLEMENCY, PLEASE Solution: 8 letters

I	T	E	C	I	F	F	O	F	F	E	N	S	E	P
N	N	N	L	A	E	P	P	A	P	T	R	I	A	L
P	O	V	A	D	D	F	R	E	E	M	I	R	C	E
E	L	I	E	D	L	R	T	S	A	C	O	U	R	T
N	I	R	T	S	N	I	O	T	C	L	U	N	E	T
A	A	Y	R	A	T	E	R	C	E	S	O	D	P	E
L	B	E	M	I	B	I	F	A	E	I	P	O	E	R
T	I	S	O	E	N	O	G	E	T	R	L	A	(F)	R
Y	L	N	J	U	R	Y	R	A	D	I	Y	(I)	R	I
C	I	E	E	U	P	C	T	P	T	R	(L)	N	E	E
N	T	C	N	U	S	U	Y	I	C	(E)	P	E	V	G
E	Y	I	B	I	M	T	C	T	R	Y	P	C	I	D
G	D	L	I	M	F	S	I	Y	U	W	A	A	E	U
A	I	N	O	D	R	A	P	C	L	A	E	R	W	J
C	E	C	N	E	D	I	V	E	E	L	E	G	A	L

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Acts, Agency, Appeal, Apply, Commutation, Court, Crime, Defendant, Evidence, Federal, File, Fine, Free, Grace, Investigate, Judge, Jury, Justice, Lawyer, Legal, Letter, Liability, License, Mercy, Mild, Offense, Office, Pardon, Parole, Peace, Penalty, Petition, Pity, Politics, Probation, Public, Record, Reduce, Review, Rule, Secretary, Spare, Trial

Last Friday's Answer: Brothers

To purchase **THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 56 through 76,** order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Jokic has 3rd straight triple-double, Nuggets beat Warriors

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Nikola Jokic had 32 points, 16 rebounds and 16 assists for his third straight triple-double and 18th of the season after his long buzzer-beater against Golden State sealed the last meeting, leading the defending champion Denver Nuggets past the Warriors again in a 119-103 victory Sunday night.

Jokic hit a Stephen Curry-like 40-footer as Denver rallied for a 130-127 win at Chase Center on Jan. 4, then topped Curry and Co. to sweep the four-game season series. On Sunday, Jokic shot 13 for 24 on the way to his 122nd career regular-season triple-double.

Klay Thompson scored 23 points all in the first half and Curry overcame a slow start missing his first seven 3-point tries before finishing with 20 points—all but four scored in the second half. He hit his only 3 with 3:26 left in the third in a 1-for-10 performance from deep. The two-time MVP passed both Dwyane Wade (23,165) for 32nd place and Adrian Dantley (23,177) for 31st on the NBA's scoring list.

Jamal Murray scored 27 points and Aaron Gordon 17 in the Nuggets' seventh consecutive victory against the Warriors and 10th in 11 and also their fifth in a row on Golden State's home floor since a 113-102 defeat on March 10, 2022.

AP

Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic reacts during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Golden State Warriors, Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024, in San Francisco.

SUNS 123, LAKERS 113

PHOENIX (AP)—Grayson Allen scored 24 points, Kevin Durant added 22 and Phoenix pulled away late in the fourth quarter to beat Los Angeles.

Allen and Royce O'Neale hit 3-pointers on back-to-back possessions to put the Suns up 116-104 with three minutes left. Jusuf Nurkic added 18 points, 22 rebounds and seven assists.

The Lakers trailed by 20 points late in the first quarter, but slowly cut the deficit to 92-90 by late in the third. Phoenix responded with the next six points and didn't trail in the fourth.

LeBron James led the Lakers with 28 points on 12-of-19 shooting and also had 12 assists. Anthony Davis had 22 points and 14 rebounds.

Four Phoenix starters scored at least 20 points and the Suns had a 51-34 rebounding advantage. Devin Booker scored 21 points and O'Neale added 20. Bol Bol had 11 points in 24 minutes off the bench.

BUCKS 119, 76ERS 98

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 points, Damian Lillard added 24 and Milwaukee won in Doc Rivers' return to Philadelphia.

Rivers was fired by Philadelphia after last season. He coached the 76ers from 2020-23, never getting past the second round of the playoffs, and Sunday was 12th game since taking over in Milwaukee.

Antetokounmpo also had 12 rebounds and nine assists. Tyrese Maxey had 24 points for Philadelphia. They have dropped eight of 12 games since losing reigning MVP Joel Embiid to a left knee injury.

THUNDER 123, ROCKETS 110

HOUSTON (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 36 points and Chet Holmgren added 29 to lead Oklahoma City past Houston.

The Thunder won their fifth straight to moved back into a tie with Minnesota for the Western Conference lead.

Fred VanVleet and Jabari Smith Jr. had 20 points apiece for the Rockets in the first of consecutive games between these teams. Alperen Sengun added 19 points and 12 rebounds, while Smith led the team with 17 rebounds.

The teams meet against Tuesday night in Oklahoma City.

KINGS 123, CLIPPERS 107

LOS ANGELES (AP)—De'Aaron Fox scored 33 points, Domantas Sabonis had his NBA-leading 20th triple-double and Sacramento handed Los Angeles its first two-game losing streak since December.

Sabonis finished with 17 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists. Harrison Barnes added 22 points for the Kings, who won their third in a row.

Norman Powell led the Clippers with 21 points in his first start of the season in place of Paul George, who sat out with a sore left knee. Kawhi Leonard added 20 points, as did James Harden, who made all 10 of his free throws to go with eight assists.

HORNETS 93, TRAIL BLAZERS 80

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Nick Richards had 21 points and 10 rebounds and Charlotte took advantage of Portland's horrible 3-point shooting.

Portland was 3 of 32 from 3-point range, with two of the makes coming in the final minutes. The Trail Blazers missed 23 in a row at one point in dropping their eighth straight to fall to 15-41.

Miles Bridges added 18 points and 10 rebounds for Charlotte, and Brandon Miller had 17 points. The Hornets improved to 15-42.

Deandre Ayton led Portland with 26 points and 19 rebounds. He was 11 of 16 from field, while the Trail Blazers shot 34.7% overall from the field.

PACERS 133, MAVERICKS 111

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Myles Turner scored a season-high 33 points, Tyrese Haliburton had 17 points and 10 assists and Indiana beat Dallas to snap the Mavericks' seven-game winning streak.

Luka Doncic finished with 33 points, six assists and six rebounds for Dallas. Kyrie Irving added 29 points and six rebounds.

Indiana to shoot 56% and make 14 3-pointers.

HAWKS 109, MAGIC 92

ATLANTA (AP)—Dejounte Murray had 25 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds, finishing just short of his first triple-double of the season, and Atlanta beat Orlando to snap a three-game skid.

Murray helped offset the loss of All-Star guard Trae Young, who will undergo surgery on his left hand Tuesday and will be re-evaluated in four weeks.

Franz Wagner had 19 points to lead for Orlando, with Paulo Banchero missing his first game of the season because of an illness.

CAVALIERS 114, WIZARDS 105

WASHINGTON (AP)—Jarrett Allen had 22 points and 12 rebounds, Caris LeVert added 18 points and 12 boards and Cleveland beat Washington to avoid its first three-game skid since December.

Evan Mobley added 21 points and Donovan Mitchell had 16 points in his return after missing the first two games following the All-Star break with an illness.

Jordan Poole scored a season-high 31 points for Washington. The Wizards have lost 11 straight to fall to 2-12 under interim coach Brian Keefe.

BULLS 114, PELICANS 106

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Nikola Vucevic had 22 points and 13 rebounds and Chicago beat New Orleans to sweep the season series.

DeMar DeRozan scored 24 points, including a left wing 3-pointer with 30 seconds left to give the Bulls a 111-106 lead.

Zion Williamson scored 19 points, tied a career high with 11 assists and grabbed nine rebounds for the Pelicans.

JAZZ 128, SPURS 109

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Lauri Markkanen scored 26 points and Utah beat San Antonio to snap a five-game skid.

Jordan Clarkson added 22 points and 10 assists for the Jazz. John Collins had 20 points and Collin Sexton added 16 points and 10 assists.

Devin Vassell led San Antonio with 27 points, and ictor Wembanyama added 22 points, 10 rebounds and five blocks. The Spurs have lost 11 of 12.

Butler, Marshall among 5 players suspended after Heat-Pelicans incident

NEW YORK (AP)—Miami's Jimmy Butler and New Orleans' Naji Marshall have been suspended for one game apiece for instigating an on-court altercation, the NBA announced Sunday.

The incident happened during the Heat-Pelicans game Friday night.

Miami's Thomas Bryant and New Orleans' Jose Alvarado were both handed three-game suspensions for fighting and leaving the bench area. Miami's Nikola Jovic also got a one-game suspension for leaving the bench area and entering the altercation, the league said.

"It felt like Jimmy shouldn't have gotten a game on that," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said Sunday at practice in Sacramento, where Miami will play on Monday. "It was really just kind of tangling and a little bit of pushing. I don't think that deserves another game because he ended up having to miss the fourth quarter (Friday). But it is what it is. Nobody wants to see it escalate to that point."

Butler—who did not think he should have been ejected—will lose nearly $260,000 in base salary because of his suspension. The rest of the suspensions will cost the four other players about $115,000, combined.

"I put my hand around his neck. He put his hand around my neck," Butler said after the game of his incident with Marshall. "And it just took off the way it did."

It started when Miami's Kevin Love fouled New Orleans' Zion Williamson under the Pelicans' basket. Butler and Marshall "engaged in a physical altercation" after the foul, the league said, and Alvarado and Bryant then fought.

Alvarado, Bryant, Butler and Marshall were assessed technical fouls and ejected from the game, which the Heat won 106-95.

Alvarado will miss games Sunday against Chicago, Tuesday at New York and Wednesday at Indiana. Marshall will miss Sunday's game against the Bulls.

Butler and Jovic will not play when Miami visits Sacramento on Monday and Bryant will miss that game, along with ones Tuesday at Portland and Thursday at Denver. Bryant played for the Nuggets last season when they beat the Heat in the NBA Finals.

The Heat could be further short-handed on Monday. Guard Tyler Herro, who left late in Friday's game after thinking he had injured his knee, was having an MRI exam on Sunday as a precaution. Herro said he expects to play either Monday or Tuesday if the MRI comes back clear.

Miami could get guard Terry Rozier back either Monday or Tuesday as well. Rozier has been out with a sprained knee but is on the cusp of returning.

Top Korea tour companies promote Saipan Marathon 2024

Top tour companies in Korea are highlighting Saipan Marathon 2024 with special sports tour products for the race on March 9, 2024, in the Marianas.

Hana Tour, Korea's biggest tour agency, is featured Saipan Marathon as their first co-op project with Runable, a social running platform. Saipan Marathon is the first event in Hana Tour's Run Trip, a line of products featuring popular marathons and running courses around the world.

Mode Tour is selling "Run with Song Ha," a 3-night, 5-day package that offers participants the chance to run alongside Song Ha, a sports influencer with over 52,000 followers. The Social Media content curated by Song Ha offers essential information and inspiration for exercise enthusiasts. The tour also incorporates tours of Marpi and marine activities.

Yellow Ballon's "From Leisure to Sightseeing" provides the opportunity to join the marathon with Sports Bong, a sports influencer with over 130,000 followers. Through her social media channels, she shares adventures and workouts that breathe new life into daily routines. With both Mode Tour and Yellow Balloon, participants can choose the full marathon, half marathon, 10K or 5K course.

Interpark Tour has introduced its first "Running Holic" package, inviting consumers to join the Saipan Marathon with former South Korea national marathoner Park Myung-hyun. The package includes coaching from Park and other nationally certified coaches offering course analysis and running strategies for the marathon.

To date, over 400 participants have registered for Saipan Marathon 2024.

"A hundred percent, we are excited to partner with the top travel agencies in Korea to give runners the experience of a lifetime at Saipan Marathon," said Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "Sports marketing remains an important and growing niche market for us. Add to that our clean and beautiful nature, the warmth of our people, our course certification by World Athletics in cooperation with the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races, and Saipan Marathon is a world-class event. We look forward to welcoming all our international runners in just couple short weeks."

Race sponsors are Skechers as Exclusive Title Sponsor of the race; Platinum Sponsor Coca-Cola/Foremost/Subway; Gold Sponsors Bridge Capital, IT&E, and Triple J Saipan; Silver Sponsors United Airlines, Matson, The Athlete's Foot, Boarderline and All-Star Sporting Goods; Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands; Northern Marianas Athletics; and Bike Pro. In-kind sponsor is M&E Enterprises Inc. Saipan.

The marathon is co-organized by MVA and Northern Marianas Athletics (NMA) and is sanctioned under the Northern Marianas Athletics rules and regulations.

The marathon will begin and end at American Memorial Park in downtown Garapan. Cash prizes will be awarded for top finishers and by age division in the marathon. Participants will receive a Limited Edition Official Saipan Marathon T-shirt, official Saipan Marathon medal, Certificate of Completion and one entry to the awards banquet on March 9 at Hyatt Regency Saipan. In-kind prizes will also be awarded for the Wacky Awards: Best Costume, Best Body Paint, Shortest Shorts, Most Awesome Shoes, Ugliest Shoes, and Craziest Hair.

Registration at www.raceroster.com will close at 5 p.m. ChST on March 7, 2024, and is $110 for the full marathon and $80 for the half marathon, 10K, and 5K. Full marathon participants must be age 18 or older. Half marathon participants must be age 14 or older. With valid photo ID, students ages 18 or younger may register for $60. Mandatory race packet pick-up will be on March 8 from 4pm to 6pm at American Memorial Park Amphitheatre in Garapan, Saipan.

A new course highlighting iconic sites from the Marianas' rich history awaits full marathon runners. The road race will traverse sites from the various eras of Marianas history, including pre-history, the Spanish administration, the Japanese administration in the early 1900s, World War II, and modern history as a U.S. Commonwealth.

For more information, visit https://raceroster.com/events/2024/78587/saipan-marathon-2024 or www.mymarianas.com or contact MVA Community Projects coordinator Ed Diaz at (670) 6640-3210 or ediaz@mymarianas.com. ***(PR)***

PIC to host Hafa Adai 5k Color Fun Run anew

By JENISHA DUBRALL
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CORRESPONDENT

The Pacific Islands Club Saipan will host its annual Hafa Adai 5K Color Fun Run on April 6, 2024, to benefit the animal welfare group, Saipan Humane Society.

Registration will start at 5:30am and the race itself will start at 6:30am. You may pick up your race packet on the day before the race, April 5, 2024, at PIC Saipan from 8am to 5pm.

The route of the Hafa Adai 5K Color Fun Run will start at PIC Saipan's south parking lot, with a turnaround point in front of Aquarius Beach Tower Hotel Saipan, and make its way back to PIC.

The run will feature five different coloring stations along Beach Road. The blue station will be at the San Antonio tennis center, the yellow station at the San Antonio basketball court, the pink station at Hopwood Junior High School, the green station at the U.S. Postal Service traffic light, the water aid station across Surf Club Saipan, and the red station in front of the Latte Built parking lot. Runners are encouraged to wear white to showcase the full effect of the bright colors after the run.

The registration fee will cost just $12 and the first 1,000 entries will be gifted a commemorative event T-shirt. After the race, PIC will also be raffling off more than $5,000 worth of prizes, including, PIC waterpark passes, The Magellan lunches/brunches, room stays, and even memberships to PIC Saipan. PIC is inviting the entire community to participate in this one-of-a-kind event.

ENSHRINED

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ished second, and in 2022 was first in the 5K event.

She said that her induction was a "surprise" and that "it's an honor. I am grateful to everyone who has been involved with me."

Jim added that she was "so happy to see a lot of talented people for sports in the CNM", and the banquet brought back a lot of memories of the 2006 Micronesian Games 2006 in Saipan. She said her favorite memory was when she ran the 1,500m, 5,000m and cross country race and won two gold and one silver medal for CNMI.

"I wish those young athletes the best of luck in Marshall Islands this summer and many more future successes. Lastly, congratulations to all of the athletes, coaches, and their families," said Jim.

The late Kabiriel passed away last year due to oral cancer. From 2010 to 2012 was a member of Hoe Lokahi Canoe Club and competed in local races and the Micronesian Cup. In 2013, moved to Saipan Paddling Club and got a silver in the Micronesian Cup in Palau. In 2014, was part of the gold medal team in the Micronesian Games in Pohnpei.

He represented the NMI in the Pacific Games in Papua New Guinea in 2015, and in 2015 and 2016's Micronesian Cup in Palau and Guam, he collected five gold and one silver medal as member of the Marianas Outrigger Club.

Besides being a paddler, Kabiriel was also active in volleyball, triathlon, running, and swimming. He was named NMSA Male Athlete of the Year twice and used to hold the NMI national record in the 800m run, triple jump, and 3,000 steeplechase. He also won a silver medal in the 3,000m steeplechase event in the 2008 Oceania Area Championships.

Pat Kabiriel, Jack's widow, and their sons—Kevin, Kaden, and Dennis—accepted his award for him said that the banquet was an emotional one for her and her family. "We were proud but emotional at the same time because we, or I, never thought that our kids and I would be standing up there on his behalf accepting one of the greatest achievements he ever received—being inducted into the hall of fame and being considered one of CNMI's legends. It was also very emotional for me as this would be the last award my husband would ever receive. It's like an end to his story."

Pat then said, "I would like to dedicate this to all athletes and those that have impacted my husband's life both in sports and in the community. Thank you also to all those that nominated him, his coaches, the federation, his teammates and friends. I truly appreciate all they do to make sure that his legacy lives on."

Tan was inducted into the hall as an administrator/official. He has been the president of the NMI Football Association for nearly two decades and is the current President of Northern Marianas Sports Association.

Tan recently secured the first-ever charter flight of Team Marianas in a Pacific Games—the 2023 Pacific Games in Solomon Islands; established a soccer facility in the NMI—the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville; is in the University of Guam Athletic Hall of Fame (Class of 2022); was a recipient of UOG Presidential Medal in 2022; and was NMSA Sports Administrator of the Year (2016).

He said after the banquet that the induction was a "total surprise."

He added, "I know many athletes, administrators, coaches and officials across all sports that have contributed so much to our sporting community and being inducted as one of them—a Hall of Fame inductee—it's an honor."

"I appreciate the nomination and the vote of confidence. This award inspires me to continue what I love—which is sports—and do my best to help," he said.

Results of the Coach of the Year; Administrator of the Year; and Team of the Year will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

LEIGH GASES

Athletics' Noriko Jim poses with her CNMI Sports Hall of Fame trophy and is joined by NMSA's Ramon Tebuteb during the 2023 NMSA Sports Award Banquet last Wednesday night at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

LEIGH GASES

Jerry Tan is inducted into the CNMI Sports Hall of Fame as an administrator/official during the 2023 NMSA Sports Award Banquet last Wednesday night at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

STAG

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untouchable fast-break plays.

The game swayed between the two teams come crunch time after a 53-41 Stag lead with 10 minutes left. However, as the clock trickled down, the game transformed into a captivating back-and-forth battle.

Long Shot relentlessly closed the gap and with mere minutes left, the score was neck-and-neck. The game was so close that it could've gone either way, but in the dying moments, a series of crucial plays and a pair of clutch free throws by Tim Wesley narrowly secured the victory for the Stag.

Kintz's stellar performance came up short but put up 41 points, while Sean Apasan was far behind at 15 points, and Irvin Malonzo added 7.

Mancao was almost at the 30-point mark with 29 points, followed by Wesley's 11, and Vincent Lumen's 10.

In other results that night, Save More notched their first win, 93-62, over Live 2 Live. In last Saturday's games, Tan Holdings blew Tax Pro/Triple L out of the court, 108-73, and Unity Trade secured their first win, 63-56 over Premier Builders. Last Sunday, Choju overpowered Yuman, 107-76, and Kag Bros defeated Lamesa Kusina, 82-61.

The next games are scheduled for tonight between Elite Force and Stag at 6:30pm, and Bourbon Bar & Cafe vs. Live 2 Live at 8pm.

Stag 75 – Mancao 29, Wesley 11, Lumen 10, Maluto 9, Bravo 2, Marchadesch 2, Marilla 2, Casaba 1.

Long Shot 73 – Kintz 41, Apasan 15, Malonzo 7, Echavez 3, Laxa 3, Cubangbang 2, Tolentino 2.

Scoring by halves: 30-23, 75-73.

SIS

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School Lady Ayuyus went at it. Both teams settled for a 4-4 deadlock as both teams could not get over the other before time expired.

KHS' Pia Ngewakl took it upon herself to score all her team's goals—and came in clutch in the 49th minute to tie the game up.

SSHS led early on from a goal by Megan Elayda in the fourth minute, followed by two back-to-back goals by Yasmeen Younis. Only one KHS goal was scored by Ngewakl at that time for a 3-1 SSHS lead.

Ngewakl then caught up in the second half and scored three more goals just as SSHS' Elayda scored the fourth goal. The game then ended in a tie as both teams could not find the back of the net towards the end.

The Lady Geckos lead the standings with their 5-0-1 record; MHS is second at 3-1-2; SSHS is at 2-1-3; and KHS are at four losses.

The semis are set for today, with SIS facing off against KHS, and MHS going against SSHS—both games at 4:45pm.

This Thursday, Feb. 29, the third-place game is at 4:45pm, with the finals set for at 6:15pm.

Jokic has 3rd straight triple-double, Nuggets beat Warriors.

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Sports

Top Korea tour companies promote Saipan Marathon 2024.

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4 enshrined into the NMSA Sports Hall of Fame

By LEIGH GASES
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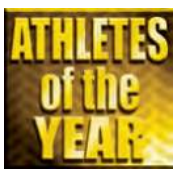
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Sports Association enshrined four new shining stars into the CNMI Sports Hall of Fame during the 2023 NMSA Sports Award Banquet last Wednesday night at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

LEIGH GASES

Basketball coach Joseph "Joe" Diaz poses with his CNMI Sports Hall of Fame trophy and is joined by NMI Basketball Federation president James Lee during the 2023 NMSA Sports Award Banquet last Wednesday night at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

The 2023 inductees, hailing from diverse sporting disciplines, were basketball's Joseph "Joe" Diaz; the late multi-sport athlete Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel; athletics' Noriko Jim; and administrator/official Jerry Tan.



Diaz founded the 670 Rollers Basketball Club on January 14, 1999 and continues to dedicate himself to the training and development of aspiring athletes in our community. His unwavering commitment to the sport has not only cultivated a love for basketball among the youth, but has also shaped numerous individuals into some of the top players the islands have produced.

He served as the NMI Men's National Basketball head coach from 2021 to 2023. Under his leadership, the team achieved remarkable success, securing a bronze medal during the 2021 FIBA Micronesian Cup Basketball Tournament held in Guam.

Diaz said he was surprised when they called his name during the banquet and that he had goosebumps.

As for his favorite sports memory, the 46-year-old said he can't pick a favorite as all of his memories are "all the same" because of the hard work, practice, and dedication the athletes put in either the youth or the national teams.

He dedicates his win to his late father Vicente Teregeyo and his mother, Debra Diaz Teregeyo. He then thanked his wife, Verna B. Diaz, his brother Vince Diaz Teregeyo, his son John Babauta, and all his players, family, and sponsors, that played a big role in the 670 Rollers Basketball Club.

Jim of athletics has been in the sport since the '90s and is still an active runner today. She was the NMSA Female Athlete of Year in 2006. Jim used to hold the CNMI national records in 1,500m, 5,000m, and 10,000m runs, and won gold medals in the 5,000m and 3K Cross Country, and silver in the 1,500m races in the 2006 Micronesian Games.

LEIGH GASES

The family of the late multi-sport athlete Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel's, including wife Pat, second right, poses with his CNMI Sports Hall of Fame trophy, and are joined by Marianas Outrigger Club's Billy Grow, right, and Northenr Marianas Sports Association's Alex Sablan, third right, during the 2023 NMSA Sports Award Banquet last Wednesday night at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

She also won gold in the 5,000m in the 2005 Micronesian Athletics Championships and silver in the 1,500m. To top it off, she won the 10K event in the Saipan Marathon 17 times (combined the open division/overall and age group). She then joined the half marathon in the 2020 Saipan Marathon and fin-

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Stag escapes Long Shot, 75-73

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Stag nipped their first win after a close game against Long Shot, 75-73, in the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League Season 2 last Thursday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Gymnasium in Gualo Rai.

Stag had a good lead down in the first half from their fastbreak plays and relentless defense, but a resurgent Long Shot team came storming in the second half.

At several points in the game, Stag had double-digit leads, but Long Shots' one-man army of James Kintz took every shot he could get. Assists from teammates, off-balance shots, and aggressive beeline attacks toward the basket resulted in Long Shots' comeback in the second half.

Kintz muscled his way through Stag's defenses and almost single-handedly carried his team to a close win. But Stag's top performer Michael Mancao eagerly tried to solidify their first victory with his speed and almost

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LEIGH GASES

Stag's Michael Mancao gets fouled by a Long Shot defender during their game in the Legends Sports Association Invitational Basketball League Season 2 last Thursday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Gymnasium in Gualo Rai.

SIS leads girls soccer heading into playoffs

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Saipan International School Lady Geckos lead the NMIFA-PSS Girls High School Interscholastic Soccer League 2023-2024 after their win in the last regular season game last Thursday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

SIS trounced Marianas High School Lady Dolphins, 3-1. Audrey Castro led the offensive with a charge at the net and scored in the 8th minute.

Right after though, MHS' Tamia Kileleman-Hix evened it up, 1-1, in the 9th minute. MHS tried to tip the scales in their favor after that, but the first half came and went without a goal from either team.

NMIFA

Saipan International School's Julie Chavez tries to maneuver past a Marianas High School player during one of their games in the NMIFA-PSS Girls High School Interscholastic Soccer League 2023-2024 at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

The Lady Geckos kept the ball close and stuck with it until they took the lead again in the 39th minute from a goal by Andrei Kaihtlyn Chavez. The Lady Dolphins tried their best to keep possession, but were overpowered by SIS' lust for a dominant season.

With another kick, Castro scored her second goal and put SIS up, 3-1 by the 45th minute. MHS succumbed to their second loss and handed SIS their fifth win to wrap up the regular season.

On the adjacent pitch, Saipan Southern High School Lady Manta Rays and Kagman High

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